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A LOAD OFF THE MIND

TO BE a writer, one has to have a rat's-nest mind. You would be surprised at the amount of money I've made by knowing that the earliest use of vitamin therapy was the all-carrot diet (very popular in the Middle Ages), that oxy-acetylene torches burn under water, that although the Aztecs built a network of roads thousands of miles long, no form of the wheel was ever used in the New World before the white man came, and the like.

But I still have numerous items that just would not fit into articles or fiction.

For example, the lung-cancer scare hit Japan as hard as it did the rest of the world. The yen value dropped drastically . . . but worried researchers found that the total sales of cigarettes remained the same. Smokers, for some still undiscovered reason, had switched to cheaper brands. Did they figure that if they were going to get lung cancer, they might as well as get cheap ones?

Another instance of ill logic

was Dickens' personal use of statistics. He refused, one year, to travel because it was Christmas and the annual quota of death by railroad accident wasn't filled.

There were two disastrous financial ventures in China before WW II:

Chrysler, which created the astonishingly ugly Airflow, sold none there—the Chinese regard the turtle as evil and said the Airflow looked like one. Darned if it didn't.

American insurance companies, introducing insurance to China for the first time, did a prodigious amount of business — until their buildings were stoned and burned. The beneficiaries were outraged because the insured had taken out life insurance and died just the same.

Right after WW I, smart operators sold millions of dollars' worth of czarist rubles. A con, of course, because even if monarchy had been restored, the money would instantly have been repudiated.

(Continued on page 113)

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HIS name was Liam O'Leary and there was something stinking in his nostrils. It was the smell of trouble. He hadn't found what the trouble was yet, but he would. That was his business. He was a captain of guards in Estates-General Correctional Institution — better known to its inmates as the Jug — and if he hadn't been able to detect the scent of trouble brewing a cell-block away, he would never have survived to reach his captaincy.

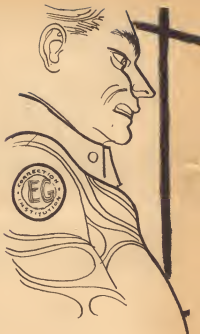
And her name, he saw, was Sue-Ann Bradley, Detainee No. WFA-656R.

He frowned at the rap sheet, trying to figure out what got a girl like her into a place like this. And, what was more important, why she couldn't adjust herself to it, now that she was in.

He demanded: "Why wouldn't you mop out your cell?"

The girl lifted her head angrily and took a step forward. The block guard, Sodaro, growled warningly: "Watch it, auntie!"

O'Leary shook his head. "Let her talk, Sodaro." It said in the *Civil Service Guide to Prison Administration*: "Detainees will be permitted to speak in their own behalf in disciplinary proceedings." And O'Leary was a man who lived by the book.



My Lady

Illustrated by GAUGHAN



Greensleeves

By FREDERIK POHL

This guard smelled trouble and it could be counted on to come—for a nose for trouble was one of the many talents bred here!

She burst out: "I never got a chance! That old witch Mathias never told me I was supposed to mop up. She banged on the door and said, 'Slush up, sister!' And then, ten minutes later, she called the guards and told them I refused to mop."

The block guard guffawed. "Wipe talk—that's what she was telling you to do. Cap'n, you know what's funny about this? This Bradley is —"

"Shut up, Sodaro."

CAPTAIN O'LEARY put down his pencil and looked at the girl. She was attractive and young—not beyond hope, surely. Maybe she had got off to a wrong start, but the question was, would putting her in the disciplinary block help straighten her out? He rubbed his ear and looked past her at the line of prisoners on the rap detail, waiting for him to judge their cases.

He said patiently: "Bradley, the rules are you have to mop out your cell. If you didn't understand what Mathias was talking about, you should have asked her. Now I'm warning you, the next time —"

"Hey, Cap'n, wait!" Sodaro was looking alarmed. "This isn't a first offense. Look at the rap sheet. Yesterday she pulled the same thing in the mess hall." He shook his head reprovingly at the prisoner. "The block guard had to

break up a fight between her and another wench, and she claimed the same business—said she didn't understand when the other one asked her to move along." He added virtuously: "The guard warned her then that next time she'd get the Greensleeves for sure."

Inmate Bradley seemed to be on the verge of tears. She said tautly: "I don't care. I don't care!"

O'Leary stopped her. "That's enough! Three days in Block O!"

It was the only thing to do—for her own sake as much as for his. He had managed, by strength of will, not to hear that she had omitted to say "sir" every time she spoke to him, but he couldn't keep it up forever and he certainly couldn't overlook hysteria. And hysteria was clearly the next step for her.

All the same, he stared after her as she left. He handed the rap sheet to Sodaro and said absently: "Too bad a kid like her has to be here. What's she in for?"

"You didn't know, Cap'n?" Sodaro leered. "She's in for conspiracy to violate the Categorized Class laws. Don't waste your time with her, Cap'n. She's a figger-lover!"

Captain O'Leary took a long drink of water from the fountain marked "Civil Service." But it didn't wash the taste out of his

mouth, the smell from his nose.

What got into a girl to get her mixed up with that kind of dirty business? He checked out of the cell blocks and walked across the yard, wondering about her. She'd had every advantage — decent Civil Service parents, a good education, everything a girl could wish for. If anything, she had had a better environment than O'Leary himself, and look what she had made of it.

The direction of evolution is toward specialization and Man is no exception, but with the difference that his is the one species that creates its own environment in which to specialize. From the moment that clans formed, specialization began — the hunters using the weapons made by the flint-chippers, the food cooked in clay pots made by the ceramists, over fire made by the shaman who guarded the sacred flame.

Civilization merely increased the extent of specialization. From the born mechanic and the man with the gift of gab, society evolved to the point of smaller contact and less communication between the specializations, until now they could understand each other on only the most basic physical necessities — and not even always then.

But this was desirable, for the more specialists, the higher the degree of civilization. The ulti-

mate should be the complete segregation of each specialization — social and genetic measures to make them breed true, because the unspecialized man is an uncivilized man, or at any rate he does not advance civilization. And letting the specializations mix would produce genetic undesirables: clerk-laborer or Professional-GI misfits, for example, being only half specialized, would be good at no specialization.

And the basis of this specialization society was: "The aptitude groups are the true races of mankind." Putting it into law was only the legal enforcement of a demonstrable fact.

"Evening, Cap'n." A bleary old inmate orderly stood up straight and touched his cap as O'Leary passed by.

"Evening."

O'LEARY noted, with the part part of his mind that always noted those things, that the orderly had been leaning on his broom until he'd noticed the captain coming by. Of course, there wasn't much to sweep — the spray machines and sweeperdozers had been over the cobblestones of the yard twice already that day. But it was an inmate's job to keep busy. And it was a guard captain's job to notice when they didn't.

There wasn't anything wrong with that job, he told himself. It

was a perfectly good civil-service position—better than post-office clerk, not as good as Congressman, but a job you could be proud to hold. He was proud of it. It was *right* that he should be proud of it. He was civil-service born and bred, and naturally he was proud and content to do a good, clean civil-service job.

If he had happened to be born a fig—a *clerk*, he corrected himself—if he had happened to be born a clerk, why, he would have been proud of that, too. There wasn't anything wrong with being a clerk—or a mechanic or a soldier, or even a laborer, for that matter.

Good laborers were the salt of the Earth! They weren't smart, maybe, but they had a—well, a sort of natural, relaxed joy of living. O'Leary was a broad-minded man and many times he had thought almost with a touch of envy how *comfortable* it must be to be a wiper—a *laborer*. No responsibilities. No worries. Just an easy, slow routine of work and loaf, work and loaf.

Of course, he wouldn't *really* want that kind of life, because he was Civil Service and not the kind to try to cross over class barriers that weren't *meant* to be—

"Evening, Cap'n."

He nodded to the mechanic inmate who was, theoretically, in

charge of maintaining the prison's car pool, just inside the gate.

"Evening, Conan," he said.

Conan, now—he was a big buck greaser and he would be there for the next hour, languidly poking a piece of fluff out of the air filter on the prison jeep. Lazy, sure. Undependable, certainly. But he kept the cars going—and, O'Leary thought approvingly, when his sentence was up in another year or so, he would go back to his life with his status restored, a mechanic on the outside as he had been inside, and he certainly would never risk coming back to the Jug by trying to pass as Civil Service or anything else. He knew his place.

So why didn't this girl, this Sue-Ann Bradley, know hers?

II

EVERY prison has its Green-sleeves—sometimes they are called by different names. Old Marquette called it "the canary;" Louisiana State called it "the red hats;" elsewhere it was called "the hole," "the snake pit," "the Klondike." When you're in it, you don't much care what it is called; it is a place for punishment.

And punishment is what you get.

Block O in Estates-General Correctional Institution was the disciplinary block, and because of

the green straitjackets its inhabitants wore, it was called the Greensleeves. It was a community of its own, an enclave within the larger city-state that was the Jug. And like any other community, it had its leading citizens . . . two of them. Their names were Sauer and Flock.

Sue-Ann Bradley heard them before she reached the Greensleeves. She was in a detachment of three unfortunates like herself, convoyed by an irritable guard, climbing the steel steps toward Block O from the floor below, when she heard the yelling.

"Owoo-o-o," screamed Sauer from one end of the cell block and "Yow-w-w!" shrieked Flock at the other.

The inside deck guard of Block O looked nervously at the outside deck guard. The outside guard looked impassively back—after all, he was on the outside.

The inside guard muttered: "Wipe rats! They're getting on my nerves."

The outside guard shrugged.

"Detail, halt!" The two guards turned to see what was coming in as the three new candidates for the Greensleeves slumped to a stop at the head of the stairs. "Here they are," Sodaro told them. "Take good care of 'em, will you? Especially the lady—she's going to like it here, because there's plenty of wipes and greas-

ers and figgers to keep her company." He laughed coarsely and abandoned his charges to the Block O guards.

The outside guard said sourly: "A woman, for God's sake. Now O'Leary knows I hate it when there's a woman in here. It gets the others all riled up."

"Let them in," the inside guard told him. "The others are riled up already."

Sue-Ann Bradley looked carefully at the floor and paid them no attention. The outside guard pulled the switch that turned on the tanglefoot electronic fields that swamped the floor of the block corridor and of each individual cell. While the fields were on, you could ignore the prisoners—they simply could not move fast enough, against the electronic drag of the field, to do any harm. But it was a rule that, even in Block O, you didn't leave the tangler fields on all the time—only when the cell doors had to be opened or a prisoner's restraining garment removed.

Sue-Ann walked bravely forward through the opened gate—and fell flat on her face. It was her first experience of a tanglefoot field. It was like walking through molasses.

The guard guffawed and lifted her up by one shoulder. "Take it easy, auntie. Come on, get in your cell." He steered her in the right

direction and pointed to a green-sleeved straitjacket on the cell cot. "Put that on. Being as you're a lady, we won't tie it up, but the rules say you got to wear it and the rules— Hey. She's crying!" He shook his head, marveling. It was the first time he had ever seen a prisoner cry in the Green-sleeves.

However, he was wrong. Sue-Ann's shoulders were shaking, but not from tears. Sue-Ann Bradley had got a good look at Sauer and at Flock as she passed them by and she was fighting off an almost uncontrollable urge to retch.

SAUER and Flock were what are called prison wolves. They were laborers—"wipes," for short—or, at any rate, they had been once. They had spent so much time in prisons that it was sometimes hard even for them to remember what they really were, outside. Sauer was a big, grinning redhead with eyes like a water moccasin. Flock was a lithe five-footer with the build of a water moccasin—and the sad, stupid eyes of a calf.

Sauer stopped yelling for a moment. "Hey, Flock!"

"What do you want, Sauer?" called Flock from his own cell.

"We got a lady with us! Maybe we ought to cut out this yelling so as not to disturb the lady!" He screeched with howling, maniacal

laughter. "Anyway, if we don't cut this out, they'll get us in trouble, Flock!"

"Oh, you think so?" shrieked Flock. "Jeez, I wish you hadn't said that, Sauer. You got me scared! I'm so scared, I'm gonna have to yell!"

The howling started all over again.

The inside guard finished putting the new prisoners away and turned off the tangler field once more. He licked his lips. "Say, you want to take a turn in here for a while?"

"Uh-uh." The outside guard shook his head.

"You're yellow," the inside guard said moodily. "Ah, I don't know why I don't quit this lousy job. Hey, you! Pipe down or I'll come in and beat your head off!"

"Ee-ee-ee!" screamed Sauer in a shrill falsetto. "I'm scared!" Then he grinned at the guard, all but his water-moccasin eyes. "Don't you know you can't hurt a wipe by hitting him on the head, Boss?"

"Shut up!" yelled the inside guard.

Sue-Ann Bradley's weeping now was genuine. She simply could not help it. The crazy yowling of the hard-timers, Sauer and Flock, was getting under her skin. They weren't even—even *human*, she told herself miserably, trying to weep silently so as not to give

the guards the satisfaction of hearing her—they were animals!

Resentment and anger, she could understand. She told herself doggedly that resentment and anger were natural and right. They were perfectly normal expressions of the freedom-loving citizen's rebellion against the vile and stifling system of Categorized Classes. It was good that Sauer and Flock still had enough spirit to struggle against the vicious system—

But did they have to scream so?

The senseless yelling was driving her crazy. She abandoned herself to weeping and she didn't even care who heard her any more. Senseless!

It never occurred to Sue-Ann Bradley that it might not be senseless, because noise hides noise. But then she hadn't been a prisoner very long.

III

"I SMELL trouble," said O'Leary to the warden.

"Trouble? Trouble?" Warden Schluckebier clutched his throat and his little round eyes looked terrified—as perhaps they should have. Warden Godfrey Schluckebier was the almighty Caesar of ten thousand inmates in the Jug, but privately he was a fussy old man trying to hold onto the last

decent job he would have in his life.

"Trouble? *What* trouble?"

O'Leary shrugged. "Different things. You know Lafon, from Block A? This afternoon, he was playing ball with the laundry orderlies in the yard."

The warden, faintly relieved, faintly annoyed, scolded: "O'Leary, what did you want to worry me for? There's nothing wrong with playing ball in the yard. That's what recreation periods are for."

"You don't see what I mean, Warden. Lafon was a professional on the outside—an architect. Those laundry cons were laborers. Pros and wifes don't mix; it isn't natural. And there are other things."

O'Leary hesitated, frowning. How could you explain to the warden that it didn't *smell* right?

"For instance—Well, there's Aunt Mathias in the women's block. She's a pretty good old girl—that's why she's the block orderly. She's a lifer, she's got no place to go, she gets along with the other women. But today she put a woman named Bradley on report. Why? Because she told Bradley to mop up in wipe talk and Bradley didn't understand. Now Mathias wouldn't—"

The warden raised his hand. "Please, O'Leary, don't bother me about that kind of stuff." He

sighed heavily and rubbed his eyes. He poured himself a cup of steaming black coffee from a brewpot, reached in a desk drawer for something, hesitated, glanced at O'Leary, then dropped a pale blue tablet into the cup. He drank it down eagerly, ignoring the scalding heat.

He leaned back, looking suddenly happier and much more assured.

"O'Leary, you're a guard captain, right? And I'm your warden. You have your job, keeping the inmates in line, and I have mine. Now your job is just as important as my job," he said piously. "Everybody's job is just as important as everybody else's, right? But we have to stick to our own jobs. We don't want to try to pass."

O'Leary snapped erect, abruptly angry. Pass! What the devil way was that for the warden to talk to him?

"Excuse the expression, O'Leary," the warden said anxiously. "I mean, after all, 'Specialization is the goal of civilization,' right?" He was a great man for platitudes, was Warden Schluckebier. "You know you don't want to worry about my end of running the prison. And I don't want to worry about yours. You see?" And he folded his hands and smiled like a civil-service Buddha.

O'LEARY choked back his temper. "Warden, I'm telling you that there's trouble coming up. I smell the signs."

"Handle it, then!" snapped the warden, irritated at last.

"But suppose it's too big to handle. Suppose —"

"It isn't," the warden said positively. "Don't borrow trouble with all your supposing, O'Leary." He sipped the remains of his coffee, made a wry face, poured a fresh cup and, with an elaborate show of not noticing what he was doing, dropped three of the pale blue tablets into it this time.

He sat beaming into space, waiting for the jolt to take effect.

"Well, then," he said at last. "You just remember what I've told you tonight, O'Leary, and we'll get along fine. 'Specialization is the —' Oh, curse the thing."

His phone was ringing. The warden picked it up irritably.

That was the trouble with those pale blue tablets, thought O'Leary; they gave you a lift, but they put you on edge.

"Hello," barked the warden, not even glancing at the viewscreen. "What the devil do you want? Don't you know I'm — What? You did *what*? You're going to WHAT?"

He looked at the viewscreen at last with a look of pure horror. Whatever he saw on it, it did not reassure him. His eyes opened

like clamshells in a steamer.

"O'Leary," he said faintly, "my mistake."

And he hung up—more or less by accident; the handset dropped from his fingers.

The person on the other end of the phone was calling from Cell Block O.

Five minutes before, he hadn't been anywhere near the phone and it didn't look as if his chances of ever getting near it were very good. Because five minutes before, he was in his cell, with the rest of the hard-timers of the Greensleeves.

His name was Flock.

He was still yelling. Sue-Ann Bradley, in the cell across from him, thought that maybe, after all, the man was really in pain. Maybe the crazy screams were screams of agony, because certainly his face was the face of an agonized man.

The outside guard bellowed: "Okay, okay. Take ten!"

Sue-Ann froze, waiting to see what would happen. What actually did happen was that the guard reached up and closed the switch that actuated the tangler fields on the floors of the cells. The prison rules were humanitarian, even for the dregs that inhabited the Greensleeves. Ten minutes out of every two hours, even the worst case had to be allowed to take his hands out of

the restraining garment.

"Rest period" it was called—in the rule book. The inmates had a less lovely term for it.

AT THE guard's yell, the inmates jumped to their feet.

Bradley was a little slow getting off the edge of the steel-slat bed—nobody had warned her that the eddy currents in the tangler fields had a way of making metal smoke-hot. She gasped but didn't cry out. Score one more painful lesson in her new language course. She rubbed the backs of her thighs gingerly—and slowly, slowly, for the eddy currents did not permit you to move fast. It was like pushing against rubber; the faster you tried to move, the greater the resistance.

The guard peered genially into her cell. "You're okay, auntie." She proudly ignored him as he slogged deliberately away on his rounds. He didn't have to untie her and practically stand over her while she attended to various personal matters, as he did with the male prisoners. It was not much to be grateful for, but Sue-Ann Bradley was grateful. At least she didn't have to live *quite* like a fig—like an underprivileged clerk, she told herself, conscience-stricken.

Across the hall, the guard was saying irritably: "What the hell's

the matter with you?" He opened the door of the cell with an asbestos-handled key held in a canvas glove.

Flock was in that cell and he was doubled over.

The guard looked at him doubtfully. It could be a trick, maybe. Couldn't it? But he could see Flock's face and the agony in it was real enough. And Flock was gasping, through real tears: "Cramps. I—I—"

"Ah, you wipes always got a pain in the gut." The guard lumbered around Flock to the drawstrings at the back of the jacket. Funny smell in here, he told himself—not for the first time. And imagine, some people didn't believe that wipes had a smell of their own! But this time, he realized cloudily, it was a rather unusual smell. Something burning. Almost like meat scorching.

It wasn't pleasant. He finished untying Flock and turned away; let the stinking wipe take care of his own troubles. He only had ten minutes to get all the way around Block O and the inmates complained like crazy if he didn't make sure they all got the most possible free time. He was pretty good at snowshoeing through the tangle field. He was a little vain about it, even; at times he had been known to boast of his ability to make the rounds in two minutes, every time.

Every time but this.

For Flock moaned behind him, oddly close.

The guard turned, but not quickly enough. There was Flock—astonishingly, he was half out of his jacket; his arms hadn't been in the sleeves at all! And in one of the hands, incredibly, there was something that glinted and smoked.

"All right," croaked Flock, tears trickling out of eyes nearly shut with pain.

But it wasn't the tears that held the guard; it was the shining, smoking thing, now poised at his throat. A shiv! It looked as though it had been made out of a bedspring, ripped loose from its frame God knows how, hidden inside the green-sleeved jacket God knows how—filed, filed to sharpness over endless hours.

No wonder Flock moaned—the eddy currents in the shiv were slowly cooking his hand; and the blister against his abdomen, where the shiv had been hidden during other rest periods, felt like raw acid.

"All right," whispered Flock, "just walk out the door and you won't get hurt. Unless the other screw makes trouble, you won't get hurt, so tell him not to, you hear?"

He was nearly fainting with the pain.

But he hadn't let go.

He didn't let go. And he didn't stop.

IV

IT WAS Flock on the phone to the warden—Flock with his eyes still streaming tears, Flock with Sauer standing right behind him, menacing the two bound deck guards.

Sauer shoved Flock out of the way. "Hey, Warden!" he said, and the voice was a cheerful bray, though the serpent eyes were cold and hating. "Warden, you got to get a medic in here. My boy Flock, he hurt himself real bad and he needs a doctor." He gestured playfully at the guards with the shiv. "I tell you, Warden. I got this knife and I got your guards here. Enough said? So get a medic in here quick, you hear?"

And he snapped the connection.

O'Leary said: "Warden, I told you I smelled trouble!"

The warden lifted his head, glared, started feebly to speak, hesitated, and picked up the long-distance phone. He said sadly to the prison operator: "Get me the governor—fast."

Riot!

The word spread out from the prison on seven-league boots.

It snatched the city governor out of a friendly game of Seniority with his manager and their wives—and just when he was

holding the Porkbarrel Joker concealed in the hole.

It broke up the Base Championship Scramble Finals at Hap Arnold Field to the south, as half the contestants had to scramble in earnest to a Red Alert that was real.

It reached to police precinct houses and TV newsrooms and highway checkpoints, and from there it filtered into the homes and lives of the nineteen million persons that lived within a few dozen miles of the Jug.

Riot. And yet fewer than half a dozen men were involved.

A handful of men, and the enormous bulk of the city-state quivered in every limb and class. In its ten million homes, in its hundreds of thousands of public places, the city-state's people shook under the impact of the news from the prison.

For the news touched them where their fears lay. Riot! And not merely a street brawl among roistering wipes, or a bar-room fight of greasers relaxing from a hard day at the plant. The riot was down among the corrupt sludge that underlay the state itself. Wipes brawled with wipes and no one cared; but in the Jug, all classes were cast together.

FORTY miles to the south, Hap Arnold Field was a blaze of light. The airmen turn-

bled out of their quarters and dayrooms at the screech of the alert siren, and behind them their wives and children stretched and yawned and worried. An alert! The older kids fussed and complained and their mothers shut them up. No, there wasn't any alert scheduled for tonight; no, they didn't know where Daddy was going; no, the kids couldn't get up yet—it was the middle of the night.

And as soon as they had the kids back in bed, most of the mothers struggled into their own airwac uniforms and headed for the briefing area to hear.

They caught the words from a distance—not quite correctly. "Riot!" gasped an aircraftswoman first-class, mother of three. "The wipes! I told Charlie they'd get out of hand and—Alys, we aren't safe. You know how they are about GI women! I'm going right home and get a club and stand right by the door and—"

"Club!" snapped Alys, radar-scope-sergeant, with two children querulously awake in her nursery at home. "What in God's name is the use of a club? You can't hurt a wipe by hitting him on the head. You'd better come along to Supply with me and draw a gun—you'll need it before this night is over."

But the airmen themselves heard the briefing loud and clear

over the scramble-call speakers, and they knew it was not merely a matter of trouble in the wipe quarters. The Jug! The governor himself had called them out; they were to fly interdicting missions at such-and-such levels on such-and-such flight circuits around the prison.

The rockets took off on fountains of fire; and the jets took off with a whistling roar; and last of all, the helicopters took off . . . and they were the ones who might actually accomplish something. They took up their picket posts on the prison perimeter, a pilot and two bombardiers in each 'copter, stone-faced, staring grimly alert at the prison below.

They were ready for the breakout.

But there wasn't any breakout.

The rockets went home for fuel. The jets went home for fuel. The helicopters hung on—still ready, still waiting.

The rockets came back and roared harmlessly about, and went away again. They stayed away. The helicopter men never faltered and never relaxed. The prison below them was washed with light—from the guard posts on the walls, from the cell blocks themselves, from the mobile lights of the guard squadrons surrounding the walls.

North of the prison, on the long, flat, damp developments of

reclaimed land, the matchbox row houses of the clerical neighborhoods showed lights in every window as the figgers stood ready to repel invasion from their undesired neighbors to the east, the wipes. In the crowded tenements of the laborers' quarters, the wipes shouted from window to window; and there were crowds in the bright streets.

"The whole bloody thing's going to blow up!" a helicopter bombardier yelled bitterly to his pilot, above the flutter and roar of the whirling blades. "Look at the mobs in Greaserville! The first breakout from the Jug's going to start a fight like you never saw and we'll be right in the middle of it!"

He was partly right. He would be right in the middle of it—for every man, woman and child in the city-state would be right in the middle of it. There was no place anywhere that would be spared. *No mixing*. That was the prescription that kept the city-state alive. There's no harm in a family fight—and aren't all mechanics a family, aren't all laborers a clan, aren't all clerks and office workers related by closer ties than blood or skin?

But the declassed cons of the Jug were the dregs of every class; and once they spread, the neat compartmentation of society was pierced. The breakout would

mean riot on a bigger scale than any prison had ever known.

But he was also partly wrong. Because the breakout wasn't seeming to come.

THE Jug itself was coming to a boil.

Honor Block A, relaxed and easy at the end of another day, found itself shaken alert by strange goings-on. First there was the whir and roar of the Air Force overhead. *Trouble*. Then there was the sudden arrival of extra guards, doubling the normal complement—day-shift guards, summoned away from their comfortable civil-service homes at some urgent call. *Trouble for sure*.

Honor Block A wasn't used to trouble. A Block was as far from the Greensleeves of O Block as you could get and still be in the Jug. Honor Block A belonged to the prison's halfbreeds—the honor prisoners, the trusties who did guards' work because there weren't enough guards to go around. They weren't Apaches or Piutes; they were camp-following Injuns who had sold out for the white man's firewater. The price of their service was privilege—many privileges.

Item: TV sets in every cell. Item: Hobby tools, to make gadgets for the visitor trade—the only way an inmate could earn an honest dollar. Item: In consequence,

an exact knowledge of everything the outside world knew and put on its TV screens (including the grim, alarming reports of "trouble at Estates-General"), and the capacity to convert their "hobby tools" to — other uses.

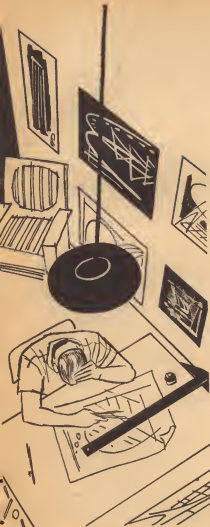
An honor prisoner named Wilmer Lafon was watching the TV screen with an expression of rage and despair.

Lafon was a credit to the Jug — he was a showpiece for visitors. Prison rules provided for prisoner training — it was a matter of "rehabilitation." Prisoner rehabilitation is a joke and a centuries-old one at that; but it had its serious uses, and one of them was to keep the prisoners busy. It didn't much matter at what.

Lafon, for instance, was being "rehabilitated" by studying architecture. The guards made a point of bringing inspection delegations to his cell to show him off. There were his walls, covered with pin-ups — but not of women. The pictures were sketches Lafon had drawn himself; they were of buildings, highways, dams and bridges; they were splendidly conceived and immaculately executed.

"Looka that!" the guards would rumble to their guests. "There isn't an architect on the outside as good as this boy! What do you say, Wilmer? Tell the gentlemen — how long you been taking these





correspondence courses in architecture? Six years! Ever since he came to the Jug."

And Lafon would grin and bob his head, and the delegation would go, with the guards saying something like: "Believe me, that Wilmer could design a whole skyscraper—and it wouldn't fall down, either!"

And they were perfectly, provably right. Not only could Inmate Lafon design a skyscraper, but he had already done so. More than a dozen of them. And none had fallen down.

Of course, that was more than six years back, before he was convicted and sent to the Jug. He would never design another. Or if he did, it would never be built. For the plain fact of the matter was that the Jug's rehabilitation courses were like rehabilitation in every prison since crime and punishment began. They kept the inmates busy. They made a show of purpose for an institution that had never had a purpose beyond punishment.

And that was all.

For punishment for a crime is not satisfied by a jail sentence. How does it hurt a man to feed and clothe and house him, with the bills paid by the state? Lafon's punishment was that he, as an architect, was *through*.

Savage tribes used to lop off a finger or an ear to punish a crim-

inal. Civilized societies confine their amputations to bits and pieces of the personality. Chop-chop, and a man's reputation comes off; chop-chop again, and his professional standing is gone; chop-chop, and he has lost the respect and trust of his fellows.

The jail itself isn't the punishment. The jail is only the shaman's hatchet that performs the amputation. If rehabilitation in a jail worked—if it were *meant* to work—it would be the end of jails.

Rehabilitation? Rehabilitation for what?

WILMER LAFON switched off the television set and silently pounded his fist into the wall.

Never again to return to the Professional class! For, naturally, the conviction had cost him his membership in the Architectural Society and *that* had cost him his Professional standing.

But still—just to be out of the Jug, that would be something! And his whole hope of ever getting out lay not here in Honor Block A, but in the turmoil of the Greensleeves, a hundred meters and more than fifty armed guards away.

He was a furious man. He looked into the cell next door, where a con named Garcia was trying to concentrate on a game

of Solitaire Splitfee. Once Garcia had been a Professional, too; he was the closest thing to a friend Wilmer Lafon had. Maybe he could now help to get Lafon where he wanted—*needed!*—to be.

Lafon swore silently and shook his head. Garcia was a spineless milksop, as bad as any clerk—Lafon was nearly sure there was a touch of the inkwell somewhere in his family. Shrewd and slippery enough, like all figgers. But you couldn't rely on him in a pinch.

Lafon would have to do it all himself.

He thought for a second, ignoring the rustle and mumble of the other honor prisoners of Block A. There was no help for it; he would have to dirty his hands with physical activity.

Outside on the deck, the guards were grumbling to each other. Lafon wiped the scowl off his black face, put on a smile, rehearsed what he was going to say, and politely rattled the door of his cell.

"Shut up down there!" one of the screws bawled. Lafon recognized the voice; it was the guard named Sodaro. That was all to the good. He knew Sodaro and he had some plans for him.

He rattled the cell door again and called: "Chief, can you come here a minute, please?"

Sodaro yelled: "Didn't you hear me? Shut up!" But he came wandering by and looked into Lafon's tidy little cell.

"What the devil do you want?" he growled.

Lafon said ingratiatingly: "What's going on, Chief?"

"Shut your mouth," Sodaro said absently and yawned. He hefted his shoulder holster comfortably. That O'Leary, what a production he had made of getting the guards back! And here he was, stuck in Block A on the night he had set aside for getting better acquainted with that little blue-eyed statistician from the Census office.

"Aw, Chief. The television says there's something going on in the Greensleeves. What's the score?"

Sodaro had no reason not to answer him, but it was his unvarying practice to make a con wait before doing anything the con wanted. He gave Lafon a ten-second stare before he relented.

"The score? Sauer and Flock took over Block O. What about it?"

Much, much about it! But Lafon looked away to hide the eagerness in his eyes. Perhaps, after all, it was not too late. . . .

He suggested humbly: "You look a little sleepy. Do you want some coffee?"

"Coffee?" Sodaro scratched. "You got a cup for me?"

"Certainly! I've got one put aside—swiped it from the messhall—not the one I use myself."

"Um." Sodaro leaned on the cell door. "You know I could toss you in the Greensleeves for stealing from the messhall."

"**A** W, CHIEF!" Lafon grinned. "You been looking for trouble. O'Leary says you were messing around with the bucks from the laundry detail," Sodaro said halfheartedly. But he didn't really like picking on Lafon, who was, after all, an agreeable inmate to have on occasion. "All right. Where's the coffee?"

They didn't bother with tanglefoot fields in Honor Block A. Sodaro just unlocked the door and walked in, hardly bothering to look at Lafon. He took three steps toward the neat little desk at the back of the cell, where Lafon had rigged up a drawing board and a table, where Lafon kept his little store of luxury goods.

Three steps.

And then, suddenly aware that Lafon was very close to him, he turned, astonished—a little too late. He saw that Lafon had snatched up a metal chair; he saw Lafon swinging it, his black face maniacal; he saw the chair coming down.

He reached for his shoulder holster, but it was very much too late for that.

CAPTAIN O'LEARY dragged the scared little wretch into the warden's office. He shook the con angrily. "Listen to this, Warden! The boys just brought this one in from the Shops Building. Do you know what he's been up to?"

The warden wheezed sadly and looked away. He had stopped even answering O'Leary by now. He had stopped talking to Sauer on the interphone when the big convict called, every few minutes, to rave and threaten and demand a doctor. He had almost stopped doing everything except worry and weep. But—still and all, he was the warden. He was the one who gave the orders.

O'Leary barked: "Warden, this little greaser has bollixed up the whole tangler circuit for the prison. If the cons get out into the yard now, you won't be able to tangle them. You know what that means? They'll have the freedom of the yard, and who knows what comes next?"

The warden frowned sympathetically. "Tsk, tsk."

O'Leary shook the con again. "Come on, Hiroko! Tell the warden what you told the guards."

The con shrank away from him. Sweat was glistening on his furrowed yellow forehead. "I—I had to do it, Cap'n! I shorted the

wormcan in the tangler subgrid, but I had to! I got a signal—'Bollix the grid tonight or some day you'll be in the yard and we'll static you!' What could I do, Cap'n? I didn't want to—"

O'Leary pressed: "Who did the signal come from?"

The con only shook his head, perspiring still more.

The warden asked faintly: "What's he saying?"

O'Leary rolled his eyes to heaven. And this was the warden—couldn't even understand shop-talk from the mouths of his own inmates!

He translated: "He got orders from the prison underground to short-circuit the electronic units in the tangler circuit. They threatened to kill him if he didn't."

The warden drummed with his fingers on the desk.

"The tangler field, eh? My, yes. That is important. You'd better get it fixed, O'Leary. Right away."

"Fixed? Warden, who's going to fix it? You know as well as I do that every mechanic in the prison is a con. Even if one of the guards would do a thing like that—and I'd bust him myself if he did!—he wouldn't know where to start. That's mechanic work."

The warden swallowed. He had to admit that O'Leary was right. Naturally nobody but a mechanic—and a specialist electrician from a particular subgroup of the

greaser class at that—could fix something like the tangler field generators.

He said absently: "Well, that's true enough. After all, 'Specialization is the goal of civilization,' you know."

O'Leary took a deep breath. He needed it.

He beckoned to the guard at the door. "Take this greaser out of here!"

The con shambled out, his head hanging.

O'LEARY turned to the warden and spread his hands.

"Warden," he said, "don't you see how this thing is building up? Let's not just wait for the place to explode in our faces! Let me take a squad into Block O before it's too late."

The warden pursed his lips thoughtfully and cocked his head, as though he were trying to find some trace of merit in an unreasonable request.

He said at last: "No."

O'Leary made a passionate sound that was trying to be bad language, but he was too raging mad to articulate it. He walked stiffly away from the limp, silent warden and stared out the window.

At least, he told himself, *he* hadn't gone to pieces. It was his doing, not the warden's, that all the off-duty guards had been

dragged double-time back to the prison, his doing that they were now ringed around the outer walls or scattered on extra-man patrols throughout the prison.

It was something, but O'Leary couldn't believe that it was enough. He'd been in touch with half a dozen of the details inside the prison on the intercom and each of them had reported the same thing. In all of E-G, not a single prisoner was asleep. They were talking back and forth between the cells and the guards couldn't shut them up. They were listening to concealed radios and the guards didn't dare make a shakedown to find them. They were working themselves up to something. To what?

O'Leary didn't want ever to find out what. He wanted to go in there with a couple of the best guards he could get his hands on—shoot his way into the Greensleeves if he had to—and clean out the infection.

But the warden said no.

O'Leary stared balefully at the hovering helicopters.

The warden was the warden. He was placed in that position through the meticulously careful operations of the Civil Service machinery, maintained in that position year after year through the penetrating annual inquiries of the Reclassification Board. It was *subversive* to think that the

Board could have made a mistake!

But O'Leary was absolutely sure that the warden was a scared, ineffectual jerk.

THE interphone was ringing again. The warden picked up the handpiece and held it bonelessly at arm's length, his eyes fixed glassily on the wall. It was Sauer from the Greensleeves again. O'Leary could hear his maddened bray.

"I warned you, Warden!" O'Leary could see the big con's contorted face in miniature, in the view screen of the interphone. The grin was broad and jolly, the snake's eyes poisonously cold. "I'm going to give you five minutes, Warden, you hear? Five minutes! And if there isn't a medic in here in five minutes to take care of my boy Flock — your guards have had it! I'm going to slice off an ear and throw it out the window, you hear me? And five minutes later, another ear. And five minutes later —"

The warden groaned weakly. "I've called for the prison medic, Sauer. Honestly I have! I'm sure he's coming as rapidly as he —"

"Five minutes!" And the ferociously grinning face disappeared.

O'Leary leaned forward. "Warden, let me take a squad in there!"

The warden gazed at him for

a blank moment. "Squad? No, O'Leary. What's the use of a squad? It's a medic I have to get in there. I have a responsibility to those guards and if I don't get a medic—"

A cold, calm voice from the door: "I am here, Warden."

O'Leary and the warden both jumped up.

The medic nodded slightly. "You may sit down."

"Oh, Doctor! Thank heaven you're here!" The warden was falling all over himself, getting a chair for his guest, flustering about.

O'Leary said sharply: "Wait a minute, Warden. You can't let the doctor go in alone!"

"He isn't alone!" The doctor's intern came from behind him, scowling belligerently at O'Leary. Youngish, his beard pale and silky, he was a long way from his first practice. "I'm here to assist him!"

O'Leary put a strain on his patience. "They'll eat you up in there, Doc! Those are the worst cons in the prison. They've got two hostages already. What's the use of giving them two more?"

The medic fixed him with his eyes. He was a tall man and he wore his beard proudly. "Guard, do you think you can prevent me from healing a sufferer?" He folded his hands over his abdomen and turned to leave.

The intern stepped aside and bowed his head.

O'Leary surrendered. "All right, you can go. But I'm coming with you — with a squad!"

INMATE Sue-Ann Bradley cowered in her cell. The Greensleeves was jumping. She had never—no, *never*, she told herself wretchedly — thought that it would be anything like this. She listened unbelievably to the noise the released prisoners were making, smashing the chairs and commodes in their cells, screaming threats at the bound guards.

She faced the thought with fear, and with the sorrow of a murdered belief that was worse than fear. It was bad that she was in danger of dying right here and now, but what was even worse was that the principles that had brought her to the Jug were dying, too.

Wipes were *not* the same as Civil-Service people!

A bull's roar from the corridor and a shocking crash of glass—that was Flock, and apparently he had smashed the TV interphone.

"What in the world are they *doing*?" Inmate Bradley sobbed to herself. It was beyond comprehension. They were yelling words that made no sense to her, threatening punishments on the guards that she could barely imagine. Sauer and Flock were laborers;

some of the other rioting cons were clerks, mechanics — even Civil-Service or Professionals, for all she could tell. But she could hardly understand any of them. Why was the quiet little Chinese clerk in Cell Six setting fire to his bed?

There did seem to be a pattern, of sorts. The laborers were rocketing about, breaking things at random. The mechanics were pleasurably sabotaging the electronic and plumbing installations. The white-collar categories were finding their dubious joys in less direct ways—liking setting fire to a bed. But what a mad pattern!

The more Sue-Ann saw of them, the less she understood.

It wasn't just that they *talked* differently. She had spent endless hours studying the various patois of shoptalk and it had defeated her; but it wasn't just that.

It was bad enough when she couldn't understand the words—as when that trusty Mathias had ordered her in wipe shoptalk to mop out her cell. But what was even worse was not understanding the thought behind the words.

Sue-Ann Bradley had consecrated her young life to the belief that all men were created free and equal—and alike. Or alike in all the things that mattered, anyhow. Alike in hopes, alike in motives, alike in virtues. She had turned her back on a de-

cent Civil-Service family and a promising Civil-Service career to join the banned and despised Association for the Advancement of the Categorized Classes —

Screams from the corridor outside.

Sue-Ann leaped to the door of her cell to see Sauer clutching at one of the guards. The guard's hands were tied, but his feet were free; he broke loose from the clumsy clown with the serpent's eyes, almost fell, ran toward Sue-Ann.

There was nowhere else to run. The guard, moaning and gasping, tripped, slid, caught himself and stumbled into her cell. "Please!" he begged. "That crazy Sauer — he's going to cut my ear off! For heaven's sake, ma'am — stop him!"

SUE-ANN stared at him, between terror and tears. Stop Sauer! If only she could. The big redhead was lurching stiffly toward them — raging, but not so angry that the water-moccasin eyes showed heat.

"Come here, you figger scum!" he roared.

The epithet wasn't even close — the guard was Civil Service through and through — but it was like a reviving whip-sting to Sue-Ann Bradley.

"Watch your language, Mr. Sauer!" she snapped incongruously.

Sauer stopped dead and blinked.

"Don't you dare hurt him!" she warned. "Don't you see, Mr. Sauer, you're playing into their hands? They're trying to divide us. They pit mechanic against clerk, laborer against armed forces. And you're helping them! Brother Sauer, I beg —"

The redhead spat deliberately on the floor.

He licked his lips, and grinned an amiable clown's grin, and said in his cheerful, buffoon bray: "Auntie, go verb your adjective adjective noun."

Sue-Ann Bradley gasped and turned white. She had known such words existed — but only theoretically. She had never expected to *hear* them. And certainly she would never have believed she would hear them, applied to her, from the lips of a — a *laborer*.

At her knees, the guard shrieked and fell to the floor.

"Sauer! Sauer!" A panicky bel- low from the corridor; the red-haired giant hesitated. "Sauer, come on out here! There's a million guards coming up the stairs. Looks like trouble!"

Sauer said hoarsely to the unconscious guard: "I'll take care of *you*." And he looked blankly at the girl, and shook his head, and hurried back outside to the corridor.

Guards were coming, all right — not a million of them, but half a dozen or more. And leading them all was the medic, calm, bearded face looking straight ahead, hands clasped before him, ready to heal the sick, comfort the aged or bring new life into the world.

"Hold it!" shrieked little Flock, crouched over the agonizing blister on his abdomen, gun in hand, peering insanely down the steps. "Hold it or —"

"Shut up." Sauer called softly to the approaching group: "Let only the doc come up. Nobody else!"

The intern faltered; the guards stopped dead; the medic said calmly: "I must have my intern with me." He glanced at the barred gate wonderingly.

Sauer hesitated. "Well — all right. But no guards!"

A few yards away, Sue-Ann Bradley was stuffing the syncope form of the guard into her small washroom.

It was time to take a stand. No more cowering, she told herself desperately. No more waiting. She closed the door on the guard, still unconscious, and stood grimly before it. Him, at least, she would save if she could. They could get him, but only over her dead body.

Or anyway, she thought with a sudden throbbing in her throat, over her body.

AFTER O'Leary and the medic left, the warden tottered to a chair — but not for long. His secretary appeared, eyes bulging. "The governor!" he gasped.

Warden Schluckebier managed to say: "Why, Governor! How good of you to come —"

The governor shook him off and held the door open for the men who had come with him. There were reporters from all the news services, officials from the township governments within the city-state. There was an Air GI with major's leaves on his collar — "Liaison, sir," he explained crisply to the warden, "just in case you have any orders for our men up there." There were nearly a dozen others.

The warden was quite overcome.

The governor rapped out: "Warden, no criticism of you, of course, but I've come to take personal charge. I'm superseding you under Rule Twelve, Paragraph A, of the Uniform Civil Service Code. Right?"

"Oh, *right!*" cried the warden, incredulous with joy.

"The situation is bad — perhaps worse than you think. I'm seriously concerned about the hostages those men have in there. And I had a call from Senator Bradley a short time ago —"

"Senator Bradley?" echoed the warden.

"Senator *Sebastian* Bradley. One of our foremost civil servants," the governor said firmly. "It so happens that his daughter is in Block O as an inmate."

The warden closed his eyes. He tried to swallow, but the throat muscles were paralyzed.

"There is no question," the governor went on briskly, "about the propriety of her being there. She was duly convicted of a felonious act, namely conspiracy and incitement to riot. But you see the position."

The warden saw all too well.

"Therefore," said the governor. "I intend to go in to Block O myself. Sebastian Bradley is an old and personal friend — as well," he emphasized, "as being a senior member of the Reclassification Board. I understand a medic is going to Block O. I shall go with him."

The warden managed to sit up straight. "He's gone. I mean they already left, Governor. But I assure you Miss Brad — Inmate Bradley — that is, the young lady is in no danger. I have already taken precautions," he said, gaining confidence as he listened to himself talk. "I — uh — I was deciding on a course of action as you came in. See, Governor, the guards on the walls are all armed. All they have to do is fire a cou-

ple of rounds into the yard and then the 'copters could start dropping tear gas and light fragmentation bombs and —"

The governor was already at the door. "You will *not*," he said; and: "Now which way did they go?"

O'LEARY was in the yard and he was smelling trouble, loud and strong. The first he knew that the rest of the prison had caught the riot fever was when the lights flared on in Cell Block A.

"That Sodaro!" he snarled, but there wasn't time to worry about that Sodaro. He grabbed the rest of his guard detail and double-timed it toward the New Building, leaving the medic and a couple of guards walking sedately toward the Old. Block A, on the New Building's lowest tier, was already coming to life; a dozen yards, and Blocks B and C lighted up.

And a dozen yards more and they could hear the yelling; and it wasn't more than a minute before the building doors opened.

The cons had taken over three more blocks. How? O'Leary didn't take time even to guess. The inmates were piling out into the yard. He took one look at the rushing mob. Crazy! It was Wilmer Lafon leading the rioters, with a guard's gun and a voice screaming threats! But O'Leary

didn't take time to worry about an honor prisoner gone bad, either.

"Let's get out of here!" he belowed to the detachment, and they ran.

Just plain ran. Cut and ran, scattering as they went.

"Wait!" screamed O'Leary, but they weren't waiting. Cursing himself for letting them get out of hand, O'Leary salvaged two guards and headed on the run for the Old Building, huge and dark, all but the topmost lights of Block O.

They saw the medic and his escort disappearing into the bulk of the Old Building and they saw something else. There were inmates between them and the Old Building! The Shops Building lay between—with a dozen more cell blocks over the workshops that gave it its name—and there was a milling rush of activity around its entrance, next to the laundry shed—

'The laundry shed.

O'Leary stood stock still. Lafon leading the breakout from Block A. The little greaser who was a trusty in the Shops Building sabotaging the yard's tangle circuit. Sauer and Flock taking over the Greensleeves with a manufactured knife and a lot of guts.

Did it fit together? Was it all part of a plan?

That was something to find out

—but not just then. "Come on," O'Leary cried to the two guards, and they raced for the temporary safety of the main gates.

The whole prison was up and yelling now.

O'Leary could hear scattered shots from the beat guards on the wall—*Over their heads, over their heads!* he prayed silently. And there were other shots that seemed to come from inside the walls—guards shooting, or convicts with guards' guns, he couldn't tell which. The yard was full of convicts now, in bunches and clumps; but none near the gate. And they seemed to have lost some of their drive. They were milling around, lit by the searchlights from the wall, yelling and making a lot of noise . . . but going nowhere in particular. Waiting for a leader, O'Leary thought, and wondered briefly what had become of Lafon.

"You Captain O'Leary?" somebody demanded.

HE TURNED and blinked. Good Lord, the governor! He was coming through the gate, waving aside the gate guards, alone. "You him?" the governor repeated. "All right, glad I found you. I'm going into Block O with you."

O'Leary swallowed and waved inarticulately at the teeming cons. True, there were none immedi-

ately near by—but there were plenty in the yard! Riots meant breaking things up; already the inmates had started to break up the machines in the laundry shed and the athletic equipment in the yard lockers. When they found a couple of choice breakables like O'Leary and the governor, they'd have a ball!

"But, Governor—"

"But my foot! Can you get me in there or can't you?"

O'Leary gauged their chances. It wasn't more than fifty feet to the main entrance to the Old Building—not at the moment guarded, since all the guards were in hiding or on the walls, and not as yet being invaded by the inmates at large.

He said: "You're the boss. Hold on a minute—" The searchlights were on the bare yard cobblestones in front of them; in a moment, the searchlights danced away.

"Come on!" cried O'Leary, and jumped for the entrance. The governor was with him and a pair of the guards came stumbling after.

They made it to the Old Building.

Inside the entrance, they could hear the noise from outside and the yelling of the inmates who were still in their cells. But around them was nothing but gray steel walls and the stairs go-



ing all the way up to Block O.

"Up!" panted O'Leary, and they clattered up the steel steps.

They would have made it—if it hadn't been for the honor inmate, Wilmer Lafon, who knew what he was after and had headed for the Greensleeves through the back way. In fact, they did make



it — but not the way they planned. "Get out of the way!" yelled O'Leary at Lafon and the half-dozen inmates with him; and "Go to hell!" screamed Lafon, charging; and it was a rough-and-tumble fight, and O'Leary's party lost it, fair and square.

So when they got to Block O, it

was with the governor marching before a convict-held gun, and with O'Leary cold unconscious, a lump from a gun-butt on the side of his head.

As they came up the stairs, Sauer was howling at the medic: "You got to fix up my boy! He's dying and all you do is sit there!"

The medic said patiently: "My son, I've dressed his wound. He is under sedation and I must rest. There will be other casualties."

Sauer raged, but that was as far as it went. Even Sauer wouldn't attack a medic. He would as soon strike an Attorney, or even a Director of Funerals. It wasn't merely that they were Professionals. Even among the Professional class, they were special; not superior, exactly, but *apart*. They certainly were not for the likes of Sauer to fool with and Sauer knew it.

"Somebody's coming!" bawled one of the other freed inmates.

SAUER jumped to the head of the steps, saw that Lafon was leading the group, stepped back, saw whom Lafon's helpers were carrying and leaped forward again.

"Cap'n O'Leary!" he roared. "Gimme!"

"Shut up," said Wilmer Lafon, and pushed the big redhead out of the way. Sauer's jaw dropped and the snake eyes opened wide.

"Wilmer," he protested feebly. But that was all the protest he made, because the snake's eyes had seen that Lafon held a gun. He stood back, the big hands half outstretched toward the unconscious guard captain, O'Leary, and the cold eyes became thoughtful.

And then he saw who else was with the party. "Wilmer! You got the governor there!"

Lafon nodded. "Throw them in a cell," he ordered, and sat down on a guard's stool, breathing hard. It had been a fine fight on the steps, before he and his boys had subdued the governor and the guards, but Wilmer Lafon wasn't used to fighting. Even six years in the Jug hadn't turned an architect into a laborer; physical exertion simply was not his metier.

Sauer said coaxingly: "Wilmer, won't you leave me have O'Leary for a while? If it wasn't for me and Flock, you'd still be in A Block and —"

"Shut up," Lafon said again, gently enough, but he waved the gun muzzle. He drew a deep breath, glanced around him and grinned. "If it wasn't for you and Flock," he mimicked. "If it wasn't for you and Flock! Sauer, you wipe clown, do you think it took *brains* to file down a shiv and start things rolling? If it wasn't for *me*, you and Flock would have beaten up a few guards, and had your kicks for half an hour, and then the whole prison would fall in on you! It was me, Wilmer Lafon, who set things up and you know it!"

He was yelling and suddenly he realized he was yelling. And what was the use, he demanded of himself contemptuously, of trying

to argue with a bunch of lousy wipes and greasers? They'd never understand the long, soul-killing hours of planning and sweat. They wouldn't realize the importance of the careful timing—of arranging that the laundry cons would start a disturbance in the yard right after the Greensleeves hard-timers kicked off the riot, of getting the little greaser Hiroko to short-circuit the yard field so the laundry cons could start their disturbances.

It took a *Professional* to organize and plan—yes, and to make sure that he himself was out of it until everything was ripe, so that if anything went wrong, he was all right. It took somebody like Wilmer Lafon—a *Professional*, who had spent six years too long in the Jug—

And who would shortly be getting out.

VII

ANY prison is a ticking bomb. Estates-General was in process of going off.

From the Greensleeves, where the trouble had started, clear out to the trusty farms that ringed the walls, every inmate was up and jumping. Some were still in their cells—the scared ones, the decrepit oldsters, the short-termers who didn't dare risk their early discharge. But for every

man in his cell, a dozen were out and yelling.

A torch, licking as high as the hanging helicopters, blazing up from the yard—that was the the laundry shed. Why burn the laundry? The cons couldn't have said. It was burnable and it was there—burn it!

The yard lay open to the wrath of the helicopters, but the helicopters made no move. The cobblestones were solidly covered with milling men. The guards were on the walls, sighting down their guns; the helicopter bombardiers had their fingers on the bomb trips. There had been a few rounds fired over the heads of the rioters, at first.

Nothing since.

In the milling mob, the figures clustered in groups. The inmates from Honor Block A huddled under the guards' guns at the angle of the wall. They had clubs—all the inmates had clubs—but they weren't using them.

Honor Block A: On the outside, Civil Service and Professionals. On the inside, the trusties, the "good" cons.

They weren't the type for clubs.

With all of the inmates, you looked at them and you wondered what twisted devil had got into their heads to land them in the Jug. Oh, perhaps you could understand it—a little bit, at

least—in the case of the figgers in Blocks B and C, the greasers in the Shop Building—that sort. It was easy enough for some of the Categorized Classes to commit a crime and thereby land in jail.

Who could blame a wipe for trying to “pass” if he thought he could get away with it? But when he didn’t get away with it, he wound up in the Jug and that was logical enough. And greasers liked Civil-Service women — everyone knew that.

There was almost a sort of logic to it, even if it was a sort of inevitable logic that made decent Civil-Service people see red. You *had* to enforce the laws against rape if, for instance, a greaser should ask an innocent young female postal clerk for a date. But you could understand what drove him to it. The Jug was full of criminals of that sort. And the Jug was the place for them.

But what about Honor Block A?

Why would a Wilmer Lafon — a certified public architect, a Professional by category — do his own car repairs and get himself jugged for malpractice? Why would a dental nurse sneak back into the laboratory at night and cast an upper plate for her mother? She must have realized she would be caught.

But she had done it. And she had been caught; and there she

was, this wild night, huddled under the helicopters, uncertainly waving the handle of a floor mop. It was a club.

She shivered and turned to the stocky convict next to her. “Why don’t they break down the gate?” she demanded. “How long are we going to hang around here, waiting for the guards to get organized and pick us all off one at a time?”

The convict next to her sighed and wiped his glasses with a beefy hand. Once he had been an Income-Tax Accountant, disbarred and convicted on three counts of impersonating an attorney when he took the liberty of making changes in a client’s lease. He snorted: “They expect us to do *their* dirty work.”

The two of them glared angrily and fearfully at the other convicts in the yard.

And the other convicts, huddled greaser with greaser, wipe with wipe, glared ragingly back. It wasn’t *their* place to plan the strategy of a prison break.

CAPTAIN LIAM O’LEARY muttered groggily: “They don’t want to escape. All they want is to make trouble. I know cons!”

He came fully awake and sat up and focused his eyes. His head was hammering.

That girl, that Bradley, was

leaning over him. She looked scared and sick. "Sit still! Sauer is just plain crazy—listen to them yelling out there!"

O'Leary sat up and looked around, one hand holding his drumming skull.

"They do want to escape," said Sue-Ann Bradley. "Listen to what they're saying!"

O'LEARY discovered that he was in a cell. There was a battle going on outside. Men were yelling, but he couldn't see them.

He jumped up, remembering. "The governor!"

Sue-Ann Bradley said: "He's all right. I *think* he is, anyway. He's in the cell right next to us, with a couple guards. I guess they came up with you." She shivered as the yells in the corridor rose. "Sauer is angry at the medic," she explained. "He wants him to fix Flock up so they can—'crush out,' I think he said. The medic says he can't do it. You see, Flock got burned pretty badly with a knife he made. Something about the tanglefoot field—"

"Eddy currents," said O'Leary dizzily.

"Anyway, the medic—"

"Never mind the medic. What's Lafon doing?"

"Lafon? The Negro?" Sue-Ann Bradley frowned. "I didn't know his name. He started the whole thing, the way it sounds. They're

waiting for the mob down in the yard to break out and then they're going to make a break—"

"Wait a minute," growled O'Leary. His head was beginning to clear. "What about you? Are you in on this?"

She hung between laughter and tears. Finally: "Do I look as if I am?"

O'Leary took stock. Somehow, somewhere, the girl had got a length of metal pipe—from the plumbing, maybe. She was holding it in one hand, supporting him with the other. There were two other guards in the cell, both out cold—one from O'Leary's squad, the other, O'Leary guessed, a desk guard who had been on duty when the trouble started.

"I wouldn't let them in," she said wildly. "I told them they'd have to kill me before they could touch that guard."

O'Leary said suspiciously: "You belonged to that Double-A-C, didn't you? You were pretty anxious to get in the Greensleeves, disobeying Auntie Mathias's orders. Are you sure you didn't know this was going to—"

It was too much. She dropped the pipe, buried her head in her hands. He couldn't tell if she laughed or wept, but he could tell that it hadn't been like that at all.

"I'm sorry," he said awkwardly, and touched her helplessly on the shoulder.

HE TURNED and looked out the little barred window, because he couldn't think of any additional way to apologize. He heard the wavering beat in the air and saw them—bobbing a hundred yards up, their wide metal vanes fluttering and hissing from the jets at the tips. The GI 'copters. Waiting—as everyone seemed to be waiting.

Sue-Ann Bradley asked shakily: "Is anything the matter?"

O'Leary turned away. It was astonishing, he thought, what a different perspective he had on those helicopter bombers from inside Block O. Once he had cursed the warden for not ordering at least tear gas to be dropped.

He said harshly: "Nothing. Just that the 'copters have the place surrounded."

"Does it make any difference?"

He shrugged. Does it make a difference? The difference between trouble and tragedy, or so it now seemed to Captain O'Leary. The riot was trouble. They could handle it, one way or another. It was his job, any guard's job, to handle prison trouble.

But to bring the GIs into it was to invite race riot. Not prison riot—race riot. Even the de-classed scum in the Jug would fight back against the GIs. They were used to having the Civil-Service guards over them—that was what guards were for. Civil-

Service guards guarded. What else? It was their job—as clerking was a figger's job, and machines were a greaser's, and pick-and-shovel strong-arm work was a wipe's.

But the Armed Services—their job was to defend the country against forces outside—in a world that had only inside forces. The cons wouldn't hold still under attack from the GIs. *Race riot!*

But how could you tell that to a girl like this Bradley? O'Leary glanced at her covertly. She looked all right. Rather nice-looking, if anything. But he hadn't forgotten why she was in E-G. Joining a terrorist organization, the Association for the Advancement of the Categorized Classes.

Actually getting up on street corners and proposing that greasers' children be allowed to go to school with GIs, that wipes intermarry with Civil Service. Good Lord, they'd be suggesting that doctors eat with laymen next!

The girl said evenly: "Don't look at me that way. I'm not a monster."

O'Leary coughed. "Sorry. I didn't know I was staring." She looked at him with cold eyes. "I mean," he said, "you don't look like anybody who'd get mixed up in—well, miscegenation."

"Miscegenation!" she blazed. "You're all alike! You talk about the mission of the Categorized

Classes and the rightness of segregation, but it's always just the one thing that's in your minds—sex! I'll tell you this, Captain O'Leary—I'd rather marry a decent, hard-working clerk any day than the sort of Civil-Service trash I've seen around here!"

O'Leary cringed. He couldn't help it. Funny, he told himself, I thought I was shockproof—but this goes too far!

A bull-roar from the corridor. Sauer.

O'Leary spun. The big red-head was yelling: "Bring the governor out here. Lafon wants to talk to him!"

O'LEARY went to the door of the cell, fast.

A slim, pale con from Block A was pushing the governor down the hall, toward Sauer and Lafon. The governor was a strong man, but he didn't struggle. His face was as composed and remote as the medic's; if he was afraid, he concealed it extremely well.

Sue-Ann Bradley stood beside O'Leary. "What's happening?"

He kept his eyes on what was going on. "Lafon is going to try to use the governor as a shield, I think." The voice of Lafon was loud, but the noises outside made it hard to understand. But O'Leary could make out what the dark ex-Professional was saying: "—know damn well you did some-

thing. But what? *Why don't they crush out?*"

Mumble-mumble from the Governor. O'Leary couldn't hear the words.

But he could see the effect of them in Lafon's face, hear the rage in Lafon's voice. "Don't call me a liar, you civvy punk! You did something. I had it all planned, do you hear me? The laundry boys were going to rush the gate, the Block A bunch would follow—and then I was going to breeze right through. But you loused it up somehow. You must've!"

His voice was rising to a scream. O'Leary, watching tautly from the cell, thought: He's going to break. He can't hold it in much longer.

"All right!" shouted Lafon, and even Sauer, looming behind him, looked alarmed. "It doesn't matter what you did. I've got you now and you are going to get me out of here. You hear? I've got this gun and the two of us are going to walk right out, through the gate, and if anybody tries to stop us—"

"Hey," said Sauer, waking up.

"—if anybody tries to stop us, you'll get a bullet right in—"

"Hey!" Sauer was roaring loud as Lafon himself now. "What's this talk about the two of you? You aren't going to leave me and Flock!"

"Shut up," Lafon said conversationally, without taking his eyes off the governor.

But Sauer, just then, was not the man to say "shut up" to, and especially he was not a man to take your eyes away from.

"That's torn it," O'Leary said aloud. The girl started to say something.

But he was no longer there to hear.

It looked very much as though Sauer and Lafon were going to tangle. And when they did, it was the end of the line for the governor.

CAPTAIN O'LEARY hurtled out of the sheltering cell and skidded down the corridor. Lafon's face was a hawk's face, gleaming with triumph. As he saw O'Leary coming toward him, the hawk sneer froze. He brought the gun up, but O'Leary was a fast man.

O'Leary leaped on the lithe black honor prisoner. Lafon screamed and clutched; and O'Leary's lunging weight drove him back against the wall. Lafon's arm smacked against the steel grating and the gun went flying. The two of them clinched and fell, gouging, to the floor.

Grabbing the advantage, O'Leary hammered the con's head against the deck, hard enough to split a skull. And perhaps it split Lafon's, because the dark face

twitched and froth appeared at the lips; and the body slacked.

One down!

Now Sauer was charging. O'Leary wriggled sidewise and the big redhead blundered crashing into the steel grate. Sauer fell and O'Leary caught at him. He tried hammering the head as he swarmed on top of the huge clown. But Sauer only roared the louder. The bull body surged under O'Leary and then Sauer was on top and O'Leary wasn't breathing. Not at all.

Good-by, Sue-Ann, O'Leary said silently, without meaning to say anything of the kind; and even then he wondered why he was saying it.

O'Leary heard a gun explode beside his head.

Amazing, he thought, I'm breathing again! The choking hands were gone from his throat.

It took him a moment to realize that it was Sauer who had taken the bullet, not him. Sauer who now lay dead, not O'Leary. But he realized it when he rolled over, and looked up, and saw the girl with the gun still in her hand, staring at him and weeping.

He sat up. The two guards still able to walk were backing Sue-Ann Bradley up. The governor was looking proud as an eagle, pleased as a mother hen.

The Greensleeves was back in the hands of law and order.

The medic came toward O'Leary, hands folded. "My son," he said, "if your throat needs—"

O'Leary interrupted him. "I don't need a thing, Doc! I've got everything I want right now."

VIII

INMATE Sue-Ann Bradley cried: "They're coming! O'Leary, they're coming!"

The guards who had once been hostages clattered down the steps to meet the party. The cons from the Greensleeves were back in their cells. The medic, after finishing his chores on O'Leary himself, paced meditatively out into the wake of the riot, where there was plenty to keep him busy. A faintly guilty expression tintured his carven face. Contrary to his oath to care for all humanity in anguish, he had not liked Lafon or Sauer.

The party of fresh guards appeared and efficiently began re-locking the cells of the Greensleeves.

"Excuse me, Cap'n," said one, taking Sue-Ann Bradley by the arm. "I'll just put this one back—"

"I'll take care of her," said Liam O'Leary. He looked at her sideways as he rubbed the bruises on his face.

The governor tapped him on the shoulder. "Come along," he said, looking so proud of himself,

so pleased. "Let's go out in the yard for a breath of fresh air." He smiled contentedly at Sue-Ann Bradley. "You, too."

O'Leary protested instinctively: "But she's an inmate!"

"And I'm a governor. Come along."

They walked out into the yard. The air was fresh, all right. A handful of cons, double-guarded by sleepy and irritable men from the day shift, were hosing down the rubble on the cobblestones. The yard was a mess, but it was quiet now. The helicopters were still riding their picket line, glowing softly in the early light that promised sunrise.

"My car," the governor said quietly to a state policeman who appeared from nowhere. The trooper snapped a salute and trotted away.

"I killed a man," said Sue-Ann Bradley, looking a little ill.

"You saved a man," corrected the governor. "Don't weep for that Lafon. He was willing to kill a thousand men if he had to, to break out of here."

"But he never did break out," said Sue-Ann.

The governor stretched contentedly. "He never had a chance. Laborers and clerks join together in a breakout? It would never happen. They don't even speak the same language—as you have discovered, my dear."

SUE-ANN blazed: "I still believe in the equality of Man!"

"Oh, please do," the governor said, straight-faced. "There's nothing wrong with that. Your father and I are perfectly willing to admit that men are equal—but we can't admit that all men are the same. Use your eyes! What you believe in is your business, but," he added, "when your beliefs extend to setting fire to segregated public lavatories as a protest move, which is what got you arrested, you apparently need to be taught a lesson. Well, perhaps you've learned it. You were a help here tonight and that counts for a lot."

Captain O'Leary said, face furrowed: "What about the warden, Governor? They say the category system is what makes the world go round; it fits the right man to the right job and keeps him there. But look at Warden Shluckebier! He fell completely apart at the seams. He —"

"Turn that statement around, O'Leary."

"Turn —?"

The governor nodded. "You've got it reversed. Not the right man for the job—the right job for the man! We've got Shluckebier on our hands, see? He's been born; it's too late to do anything about that. He will go to pieces in an emergency. So where do we put him?"

O'Leary stubbornly clamped his jaw, frowning.

"We put him," the governor went on gently, "where the best thing to do in a crisis is to go to pieces! Why, O'Leary, you get some hot-headed man of action in here, and every time an inmate sneezes, you'll have bloodshed! And there's no harm in a prison riot. Let the poor devils work off steam. I wouldn't have bothered to get out of bed for it—except I was worried about the hostages. So I came down to make sure they were protected in the best possible way."

O'Leary's jaw dropped. "But you were —"

The governor nodded. "I was a hostage myself. That's one way to protect them, isn't it? By giving the cons a hostage that's worth more to them."

He yawned and looked around for his car. "So the world keeps going around," he said. "Everybody is somebody else's outgroup and maybe it's a bad thing, but did you ever stop to realize that we don't have wars any more? The categories stick tightly together. Who is to say that that's a bad thing?"

He grinned. "Reminds me of a story, if you two will pay attention to me long enough to listen. There was a meeting—this is an old, *old* story—a neighborhood meeting of the leaders of the two

biggest women's groups on the block. There were eighteen Irish ladies from the Church Auxiliary and three Jewish ladies from B'nai B'rith. The first thing they did was have an election for a temporary chairwoman. Twenty-one votes were cast. Mrs. Grossinger from B'nai B'rith got three and Mrs. O'Flaherty from the Auxiliary got eighteen. So when Mrs. Murphy came up to congratulate Mrs. O'Flaherty after the election, she whispered: 'Good for you! But isn't it terrible, the way these Jews stick together?'"

He stood up and waved a signal as his long official car came poking hesitantly through the gate.

"Well," he declared professionally, "that's that. As we politicians say, any questions?"

Sue-Ann hesitated. "Yes, I guess I do have a question," she said. "What's a Jew?"

IT WAS full dawn at last. The recall signal had come and the helicopters were swooping home to Hap Arnold Field.

A bombardier named Novak, red-eyed and grumpy, was amusing himself on the homeward flight by taking practice sights on the stream of work-bound mechanics as they fluttered over Greaserville.

"Could pick 'em off like pigeons," he said sourly to his pilot, as he dropped an imaginary bomb on a cluster of a dozen men. "For two cents, I'd do it, too. The only good greaser is a dead greaser."

His pilot, just as weary, said loftily: "Leave them alone. The best way to handle them is to leave them alone."

And the pilot was perfectly right; and that was the way the world went round, spinning slowly and unstoppably toward the dawn.

— FREDERIK POHL

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The Martyr

By ROBERT SHECKLEY

*There is no fate worse than
death, eh? Well, maybe this
will help change your mind!*

FRANK CADENA examined the tiny red dot which the hypodermic needle had left in his forearm. He said, "I don't feel a thing."

"You're not supposed to," Dr. Mellen said. "No feeling is the proper feeling," he added jovially. He was much bigger than Cadena and he exuded confidence. His large pale hands carried a faint aseptic odor of alcohol and green soap.

His colleague, Dr. Santasiere, was seated at the desk. He was thin, sour-faced and very impersonal.

Ignoring Cadena, he opened his little black bag and removed from it a Luger automatic, a silencer, an unmarked pillbox, a straight razor and a gas cylinder. Fussily, he arranged them on the desk, like tools on an operating table.

"I really don't feel a thing,"

Illustrated by RAY

Cadena said quickly. "Maybe it didn't take."

"Don't get nervous," said Mellen in his soothing professional tones.

Dr. Santasiere took a handkerchief from his breast pocket and wiped the butt of the Luger. Then he turned the handkerchief over and intently cleaned his pince-nez.

CADENA WALKED to the window. They were in Dr. Mellen's house, because it had seemed the safest place to conduct the last phase of the experiment. Outside was broad green lawn, and oak trees bordered the curved driveway, and Cadena could see two sparrows quarreling in the air.

He licked his lips and rubbed the red dot on his forearm.

"Well, shall we get on with it?" Dr. Santasiere asked.

"Hold it, hold it," Cadena said. "Maybe that stuff didn't go to work yet."

"The effect is instantaneous," Dr. Mellen assured him in a hearty but sympathetic voice.

"Let's give it a little more time to work," Cadena begged. "Five minutes!"

Dr. Santasiere frowned. "Since when does the patient dictate to the doctor?"

"It doesn't matter," Dr. Mellen replied. "We'll wait a few minutes

if it will give you greater confidence, Frank."

"It sure will," Cadena said. "It'll sure do that." He began to pace up and down the room, mechanically rubbing the red dot on his forearm.

"You will irritate the puncture," Dr. Santasiere automatically told him.

Cadena all but giggled. "A hell of a lot that matters to me. Am I right? Does it really make any difference?"

"It doesn't matter at all," Dr. Santasiere said. He began to polish the straight razor with the edge of his handkerchief.

Cadena paced for a few moments more. Then he stopped abruptly and said, "Will you, for Pete's sake, stop playing with that razor?"

"No hysterics, Frank," Dr. Mellen warned.

"Tell him to stop playing with that damned razor."

"He has a point," Dr. Mellen admitted. "One shouldn't show a patient the operating tools, you know."

Dr. Santasiere put the razor on the desk. With a stiffened forefinger, he poked it into a straight line with the Luger, the silencer, the unmarked pillbox and the gas cylinder.

"Stop playing with that damned razor!" Cadena shouted. "You'll get to use it soon enough. Five

minutes! Just stop playing with it now."

"Don't lose your nerve, Frank," Dr. Mellen said. "Sit down. Relax. Try to compose yourself."

Cadena's thin face was glistening with perspiration. He dropped into a chair and exhaustedly closed his eyes.

On the desk, an electric clock hummed, its second hand creeping implacably. Cadena's eyes snapped open.

"Don't sneak up on me," he said.

"No one is going to sneak up on you," said Dr. Mellen wearily. "I think we should get on with it, Frank."

"Five minutes more!"

"Further delay will just unsettle you. Let's finish it now."

DR. SANTASIÈRE stood up, removed his jacket and rolled up his sleeves. Dr. Mellen asked, "What method would you prefer, Frank?"

"None. None of them . . ."

"Oh, come now," Dr. Mellen said sternly. "You have an excellent assortment. These pills are tasteless. The gas has an odor, strong but not unpleasant. Perhaps, though, the simplest method would be to open a vein in your wrist, like the Romans of old."

"Tell me again about the serum," Cadena begged.

"Again? But really—"

"Tell me again. Go on, tell me."

"Very well. As per agreement, I have injected you with a serum developed by Dr. Santasiere and myself, which confers the power of complete and instant regeneration."

"Say it straight!" Cadena said. "It's an immortality serum! That's what you told me before."

"Yes, if you prefer that phraseology."

"I'm immortal right now!" Cadena cried.

"We have every reason to believe so. All that remains is this final test, in the interest of science. Now, Frank, if you will choose your method—"

"But how do I know?" Cadena asked. "How can I be absolutely sure?"

"We've been through this again and again," Dr. Santasiere said. "The serum works on guinea pigs, on rabbits and on Rhesus monkeys. You have seen the results yourself. They are unkillable by every single method we could devised."

"But I'm no ape," Cadena objected. "I'm a man. How do I know it'll work on me? There are a lot of angles to this thing I didn't figure on."

Dr. Mellen held out the pillbox. "Swallow two of these, Frank."

Cadena held the pillbox in his hand. "It's worth more than a

lousy thousand dollars, the risk I'm taking."

"A thousand dollars and *immortality*," Dr. Mellen pointed out.

"So I'm immortal right now," Cadena said slowly. "You're sure?"

"Positive."

"But I don't feel any different. I feel just the same as always."

"Take the pills, Frank," Mellen said. "Or if you prefer the razor—"

"Forget the damned razor." Cadena walked again to the window and looked at the green lawn and the oak trees. He turned, took a deep breath and said, "You can have back the thousand."

"What?"

"I want out. Immortality or sudden death—it's just too big a gamble. You can understand that, can't you?"

"Take the pills, Frank," Mellen said flatly.

CADENA THREW the pillbox across the room and ran toward the door. Mellen picked up the Luger, fitted the silencer to it and called, "Wait, Frank! Don't make me shoot you in the leg!"

Cadena turned. "No, Doc! No!"

Mellen took a firm stance, released the safety and aimed.

"Doc, please—"

"Don't move, Frank. Let it be a clean shot."

Cadena stared, his mouth open, and saw Mellen's finger turn white on the trigger. He tried to scream. The silenced Luger clicked harshly. Cadena was slammed against the door, jerked spasmodically and slid to the floor.

"Beautiful shot," Santasiere complimented. "Centered right through the heart. Beautiful!"

"I used to do quite a bit of target shooting," Mellen said. "Steady grip is the answer. And trigger squeeze, of course."

"Of course," Santasiere agreed. "I notice you didn't use your free arm as a support."

"No, it was unnecessary for so short a distance. Besides, with a weapon as balanced as the Luger — well, anyone could have done it."

"Now, now. Don't be modest. Shall we examine the patient?"

Together they bent over Cadena's body.

"The wound has closed already!" Mellen exclaimed.

"Pulse is strong."

"Respiration normal."

"Magnificent!" Dr. Mellen said. "The serum is a complete success. Pity he made such a fuss."

"Look, his eyes are opening."

Cadena's eyelids fluttered. Then his eyes opened wide.

"Well, Frank, old boy," Mellen said heartily, "I hope you aren't angry at us."



"It was part of the bargain," Santasiere reminded him.

"And you're fine. You're perfectly all right. You are truly and demonstrably immortal, Frank!"

FRANK STARED at them, not answering.

"Come, come," Mellen said. "No sense being sullen. Speak up! How does it feel to have an unlimited life-span?"

A thread of drool ran from Cadena's mouth down his chin. His hands plucked aimlessly at the air, then reached vaguely for a patch of sunlight on the floor.

"Frank!"

His fingers closed on the sunlit patch and his hands came up empty. Cadena looked at his empty fingers and began to sob.

"Trauma," Dr. Santasiere sighed. "Of all the luck."

Dr. Mellen stood up glumly. "Complete idiocy, I suppose. The shock of a gun fired at him . . ."

"Apparently that did it."

"He was a martyr to science."

"Yes. But we have an idiot on our hands now. An *immortal* idiot. What do we do about it?"

Dr. Mellen seemed perplexed for a moment. Then his face brightened.

"Why, it's obvious, Doctor. We'll start researching at once for an antidote. Something to put poor Frank out of his misery."

— ROBERT SHECKLEY

*On Your
Newsstand NOW—*

TARNISHED UTOPIA

By

Malcolm Jameson

A fascinating fast-moving adventure of a man and a beautiful girl of the present, who find themselves in a strange cruel land of the future. Transferred to a vicious world, ruled over by the cruelest of dictators, he falls in love with Cynthia (the girl from the present), but finds her cold to his attentions. The man, Winchester, is made a slave, racked with pain in the torture chambers of this strange and hideous land, this brave American plots a terrible death for the tyrannical dictator. This is the type of light-reading, fast-moving adventure you won't want to put down until finished.

*Galaxy Science Fiction Novel
No. 27*



GALAXY'S **5 Star Shelf**

THE UNQUIET SPIRIT by
*Marguerite Steen. Doubleday &
Co. Inc., N.Y., \$3.75*

THE most striking thing about Miss Steen's horror story is its gentility. Perhaps that is what makes it so effective. Its admixture of upper-class English stuffiness and its tale of possession are just the proper weird combination to invest her story with a chill that studied mood-writing would not have achieved.

The narrator of the story, an impressively titled nobleman, but in actuality a man of poor means

who had been kicked about in his youth, runs across the one upper student who had taken him under his wing during undergraduate days.

Always a moody person, Arnold Lewes, the friend, had grown even more introspective. His spookily assorted household; his broken-spirited yet defiant wife, his frighteningly unnatural son, and the woman who has some peculiar relationship with the family, all combine to make the guest's weekend stay a shivery affair.

This blood-chiller is a heart-

warming sign to those who, like me, had feared for the life of the literary ghost story in the classic tradition.

THE HUMAN ANGLE by William Tenn. Ballantine Books, N. Y., \$2.00

WILLIAM TENN is a "shocking humorist," if such a breed exists. His yarns race along in a bright, delightfully breezy fashion until the last sentence or so — and then comes the shocker. Of such genre is his off-track and completely novel "Flat-Eyed Monster." After reading this airily grim offering, you'll agree with Tenn that contact between alien races must be blindingly confusing.

His classic "The Servant Problem" formulates an ancient and basic truth in as different a story as you're ever likely to enjoy. "Party of the Two Parts" is a rip-roaring farce dealing with the Gtetan equivalent of French postcards and the efforts of the best legal minds to incarcerate the purveyor of said pornography under Galactic law, replete with plenty of loopholes for this literally slimy character.

It is almost a relief to find a couple of unTennable yarns in the collection, just as a sort of proof that even he has his off moments, too.

S-F: THE YEAR'S GREATEST SCIENCE-FICTION AND FANTASY, edited by Judith Merril. Gnome Press, Inc., N. Y., \$3.95

WITH the decline in the number of titles in this field, one would expect the anthologists to be hard hit. Well, one would be right if the sole criterion were quantity. However, some of the finest science fiction of all time is being produced and published right now. Miss Merril's book is indication enough of that.

The assortment is well varied and, with eighteen yarns to choose from, there should be at least a few to tickle the fancy of any devotee. A legitimate cavil is the repetition of anthologization. With so much to choose from, Miss Merril could — and should — have avoided this evil.

A cautionary note: the title is correct *if* you are female and have exactly the same tastes as the anthologist, for it is a collection of unswervingly personal favorites.

HIGHWAYS IN HIDING by George O. Smith. Gnome Press, N. Y., \$3.00

LIKE Bester in *The Demolished Man* and any number of efforts since, Smith postulates a future in which telepath and perceptive have become inte-

grated into society with functions peculiar to their talents.

Steve Cornell, an esper, is recovering from accident shock after a car pileup. Several items just don't add up, however. First of all, a perceptive such as he just doesn't get into accidents with his faculties being what they are.

Secondly, his fiancée has disappeared from the car without trace and he begins to doubt his own sanity when he meets blind response to his questions concerning her. The only thing that jells in his mind is a tickling memory of something wrong with the highway signs when he met with his accident.

He tracks them down and, by George O., he comes up with some answers to the crazy puzzle. There is a definite significance to the signs.

I hate to give any more of the story away because Smith has succeeded in maintaining an air of suspense throughout his book and although there is what seems to be a tangled morass of paths, espers, Mekstrom's disease, et al, he maintains credulity.

You'll go for this if you like suspense, crackling hard-boiled dialogue and a touch of Superman.

NERVES by Lester del Rey.
Ballantine Books, N. Y., \$2.00

DEL REY'S premise is one that may be indigestible to the reader. He suggests an immediate future in which atomic energy has been harnessed for industrial purposes for twenty years, at which time there is a sudden revulsion of public opinion. Congress is considering legislation outlawing atomic plants and is sending teams of Congressmen on investigative missions.

If you can believe that a society based on the products of fission can turn its back on its own technology—or, to analogize, if we were to outlaw internal combustion engines because far more Americans have been killed by them than by all our wars—then you should have no trouble enjoying this yarn. The story itself is a well-paced effort that increases tension with every page.

In a political maneuver designed to swing the pendulum of public opinion, Plant Director Palmer is attempting to produce quantities of an isotope that has proved effective in combatting the boll weevil. A friendly Southern Congressman has promised to set up an experimental station that, if successful, should convert the agricultural populace to support of the atomic facilities. That would assure his re-election and, as head of the committee, he could bottle up legislation.

Unfortunately, the manufacture

of Isotope I-713 leads to a breakdown of one of the converters with uncontrollable "hot" stuff leakage and extreme danger of degeneration into Mahler's Isotope, with a breakdown time measured in billionths of a second. That creates a nasty problem and an interesting story.

Just swallow the premise and enjoy the yarn. You can.

THE ANSWER by Philip Wylie.
Rinehart & Co., Inc., N. Y. & Toronto, \$1.50

THE average reader will have a lot of unanswered questions on finishing this book, in spite of its title.

Conditioned as we are in this field to speculation in every form, we insist that any yarn be intrinsically logical within the bounds it sets for itself. It is not giving away too much to say that the story concerns two atomic tests, one American, one Russian. Each results in the death of an angel. It is easy to see what both reactions will be and Wylie doesn't disappoint us.

The fable's message is convincing, viewed from a Sunday-school level, but this is aimed at adults and it wildly misses its target.

THE FAR TRAVELLER by Manning Coles, Doubleday & Co., Inc., N. Y., \$3.00

A MOST engaging ghost is the hero of Coles' third venture into this medium. The unfortunate victim of a multiple drowning some eighty-five years previous to the opening of the tale, he, the Graf or Duke, must haunt the halls of his castle until the status of his marriage is accepted by his familial descendants.

Drowned attempting to save the life of his bride of two days, a commoner he had married against parental wishes, his personal servant, Franz Bagel, was also drowned trying to save him. A British film company has come to his castle by permission of his descendant, the present Graf, to film, coincidentally, the story of his life. When a suspicious accident incapacitates the leading man, our materialized hero becomes the perfect choice for his own portrayer.

Incognito as he may be, Graf Adhemar engenders semi-recognition among the castle retinue and the director has his suspicions aroused as the Graf constantly offers pointers on the life of the drowned hero. He almost creates a ghostly impasse when he cannot understand why he should still have to wander wraithlike through the halls at midnight while busily engaged in fleshly play-acting during the day.

Dleightful clowning.

—FLOYD C. GALE

Advance



Agent

By CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

Raveling Porcy's systematized enigma, Dan found himself with a spy's worst break—he was saddled with the guise of a famed man!

Illustrated by FINLAY



I

DAN REDMAN stooped to to look in the mirror before going to see the director of A Section. The face that looked back wasn't bad, if he had expected strong cheekbones, copper skin and a high-arched nose. But Dan wasn't used to it yet.

He straightened and his coat drew tight across chest and shoulders. The sleeves pulled up above hands that felt average, but that the mirror showed to be huge and broad. Dan turned to go out in

the hall and had to duck to avoid banging his head on the door frame. On the way down the hall, he wondered just what sort of job he had drawn this time.

Dan stopped at a door lettered:

A SECTION
J. KIELGAARD
DIRECTOR

A pretty receptionist goggled at him and said to go in. Dan opened the inner door.

Kielgaard — big, stocky, expensively dressed — looked up and studied Dan as he came in. Apparently satisfied, he offered a chair, then took out a small plastic cartridge and held it in one hand.

"Dan," he said, "what do you know about subspace and null-points?"

"Practically nothing," admitted Dan honestly.

KIELGAARD laughed. "Then I'll fill you in with the layman's analogy, which is all I know. Suppose you have a newspaper with an ant on the middle of the front page. To get to the middle of page two, the ant has to walk to the edge of the paper, then walk back on the inside. Now suppose the ant could go *through* the page. The middle of page two is just a short distance away from the middle of page one. That going *through*, instead of around, is like travel in sub-

space. And a null-point is a place just a short distance away, going through subspace. The middle of page two, for instance, is a null-point for the middle of page one."

"Yes," said Dan patiently, waiting for the point of the interview.

Kielgaard pushed the plastic cartridge he'd been holding through a slot in his desk. A globe to one side lighted up a cottony white, with faint streaks of blue. "This," he said, "is Porcys."

Dan studied the globe. "Under that cloud blanket, it looks as if it might be a water world."

"It is. Except for a small continent, the planet is covered with water. And the water is full of seafood — *edible* seafood."

Dan frowned, still waiting.

"Galactic Enterprises," said Kielgaard, "has discovered a region in subspace which has Porcys for one null-point and Earth for another."

"Oh," said Dan, beginning to get the point. "And Earth's hungry, of course. Galactic can ship the seafood straight through subspace at a big profit."

"That's the idea. But there's one trouble." Kielgaard touched a button, and on the globe, the white layer vanished. The globe was a brilliant blue, with a small area of mingled green and grayish-brown. "The land area of the planet is inhabited. Galactic must have the permission of the inhabi-

tants to fish the ocean. And Galactic needs to close the deal fast, or some other outfit, like Trans-Space, may get wind of things and move in."

Kielgaard looked at the globe thoughtfully. "All we know about the Porcyns could be put on one side of a postage stamp. They're physically strong. They have a few large cities. They have an abundant supply of seafood. They have spaceships and mataform transceivers. This much we know from long-distance observation or from the one Porcyn we anesthetized and brain-spied. We also know from observation that the Porcyns have two other habitable planets in their solar system—Fumidor, a hot inner planet, and an Earthlike outer planet called Vacation Planet."

Kielgaard drummed his fingers softly. "Granting the usual course of events, Dan, what can we expect to happen? The Porcyns have an abundance of food, a small living area, space travel and two nearby habitable planets. What will they do?"

"Colonize the nearby planets," said Dan.

"**R**IGHT," said Kielgaard. "Only they aren't doing it. We've spied both planets till we can't see straight. Fumidor has a mine entrance and a mataform center. Vacation Planet has a

mataform center and one or two big buildings. And that's it. There's no emigration from Porcyns to the other two planets. Instead, there's a sort of cycling flow from Porcyns to Vacation Planet to Fumidor to Porcyns. Why?

"The Porcyn we brain-spied," he went on, "associated Vacation Planet with 'rejuvenation.' What does that mean we're up against? Galactic wants to make a contract, but not till they know what they're dealing with. There are some races it's best to leave alone. This 'rejuvenation' might be worth more than the seafood, sure, but it could also be a sackful of trouble."

Dan waited, realizing that Kielgaard had come to the crux of the matter.

Kielgaard said, "Galactic wants us to find the answers to three problems. One, how do the Porcyns keep the size of their population down? Two, what is the connection between rejuvenation and 'Vacation Planet'? And three, do the Porcyns have a proper mercantile attitude? Are they likely to make an agreement? Will they keep one they do make?"

Kielgaard looked intently at Dan. "The only way we're likely to find the answers in a reasonable time is to send someone in. You're elected."

"Just me?" asked Dan in surprise. "All your eggs in one basket?"

"In a situation like this," said Kielgaard, "one good man is worth several gross of dubs. We're relying on you to keep your eyes open and your mind on what you're doing."

"And suppose I don't come back?"

"Galactic probably loses the jump it's got on Trans-Space and you miss out on a big bonus."

"When do I leave?"

"Tomorrow morning. But today you'd better go down and pick up a set of Porcyn clothes we've had made for you and some of their money. It'd be a good idea to spend the evening getting used to things. We've implanted in your brain the Porcyn language patterns we brain-spied and we've installed in your body cavity a simple organo-transmitter you can use during periods of calm. Because the Porcyns are physically strong and possibly worship strength, we've had your body rebuilt to one of the most powerful human physique patterns—that of an American Indian—that we have on record."

They shook hands and Dan went to his room. He practiced the Porcyn tongue till he had some conscious familiarity with it. Then he tried his strength to make sure he wouldn't acciden-

tally use more force than he intended. Then, while the evening was still young, he went to bed and fell asleep.

It was Dan's experience that everything possible went wrong the first few days on a new planet and he wanted to be wide-awake enough to live through it.

II

THE next day, Dan left in a spacetug that Galactic was sending on a practice trip through subspace to Porcys. From the tug, he went by mataform to the lab ship in the Porcyn sea. Here he learned that he had only twenty minutes during which conditions would be right to make the next mataform jump to a trawler close to the mainland.

Dan had wanted to talk to the men on the lab ship and learn all they could tell him about the planet. This being impossible, he determined to question the trawler crew to the limit of their patience.

When Dan reached the trawler, it was dancing like a blown leaf in a high wind. He became miserably seasick. That evening, there was a violent electrical storm which lasted into the early morning.

Dan spent the whole night nauseously gripping the edge of his bunk, his legs braced against the

violent heave and lurch of the trawler.

Before dawn of the next day, aching in every muscle, his insides sore and tender, his mind fuzzy from lack of sleep, Dan was set ashore on a dark, quiet and foggy strip of beach. He stood for a moment in the soft sand, feeling it seem to dip underfoot.

This, he thought, was undoubtedly the worst start he had ever made on any planet anywhere.

From around him in the impenetrable fog came distant croakings, whistlings and hisses. The sounds were an unpleasant suggestion that something else had gone wrong. Between bouts of sickness, Dan had tried to arrange with the crew to land him near the outskirts of a Porcyn city. But the sounds were those of the open country.

What Dan wanted was to go through the outskirts of the city before many people were moving around. He could learn a great deal from their homes, their means of transportation and the actions of a few early risers. He could learn from the things he expected to see, or from the lack of them, *if* he was there to see them.

Dan moved slowly inland, crossed a ditch and came to what seemed to be a macadam road. He checked his directions and started to walk. He forced the pace so his breath came hard, and

hoped it would pump some life into his dulled brain and muscles.

As his senses gradually began to waken, Dan became aware of an odd *swish-swish*, *swish-swish*, like a broom dusting lightly over the pavement behind him. The sound drew steadily closer.

Dan halted abruptly.

The sound stopped, too.

He walked on.

Swish-swish.

He whirled.

Silence.

DAN listened carefully. The sound could be that of whatever on Porcys corresponded to a playful puppy—or to a rattlesnake.

He stepped sharply forward.

Swish-swish. It was behind him.

He whirled.

There was a feeling of innumerable hairy spiders running over him from head to foot. The vague shape of a net formed and vanished in the gloom before him. He lashed out and hit the dark and the fog.

Swish-swish. It was moving away.

He stood still while the sound faded to a whisper and was gone. Then he started to walk. He was sure that what had just happened meant something, but *what* it meant was a different question. At least, he thought ruefully, he was wider awake now.

He walked on as the sky grew lighter. Then the fog shifted to show a solid mass of low blocky buildings across the road ahead. The road itself disappeared into a tunnel under one of the buildings. To one side, a waist-high metal rail closed off the end of one of the city's streets. Dan walked off the road toward the rail. His eye was caught by the building ahead. Each was exactly the same height, about two to three Earth stories high. They were laid out along a geometrically straight border with no transition between city and farmland.

There was a faint hum. Then a long, low streak, its front end rounded like a horseshoe crab, shot out of the tunnel under the building beside him and vanished along the road where he'd just been walking.

Now Dan saw a small modest sign beside the road.

**Care
High-Speed
Vehicles Only
—Swept—**

Dan crossed the rail at the end of the street with great caution.

The Porcyn clothing he was wearing consisted of low leather boots, long green hose, leather shorts, a bright purple blouse and a sky-blue cape. Dan bunched the cape in his hand and thrust it

ahead of him as he crossed the rail, for some races were finicky about their exits and entrances. The straight, sharp boundary between city and farmland, and the identical buildings, suggested to Dan that here was a race controlled by strict rules and forms, and he was making an obviously unauthorized entrance.

It was with relief that he stood on the opposite side, within the city. He glanced back at the sign and wondered what "Swept" meant. Then he gave his attention to the buildings ahead of him.

LOW at first, the buildings rose regularly to a greater height, as far as the fog would let him see. Dan remembered the storm of the night before and wondered if the progressive heightening of the buildings was designed to break the force of the wind. The buildings themselves were massive, with few and narrow windows, and wide heavy doors opening on the street.

Dan walked farther into the city and found that the street took right-angle bends at regular intervals, probably also to break the wind. There was no one in sight, and no vehicles.

Dan decided he was probably in a warehouse district.

He paused to look at a partly erected new building, built on the

pattern of the rest. Then he heard from up the street a grunting, straining sound interspersed with whistling puffs. There was a stamping noise, a *thud* and the clash of metal.

Dan ran as quietly as he could up the street, stopped, glanced around one of the right-angle bends. He was sure the sound had come from there.

The street was empty.

Dan walked closer and studied a large brass plate set in the base of a building. It looked about twenty inches high by thirty wide with a rough finish. In the center of the plate was a single word:

SWEeper

Dan looked at this for a moment. Then, frowning, he strode on. In his mind's eye, he was seeing the sign by the road:

Care
High-Speed
Vehicles Only
—Swept—

Dan couldn't decide whether the word "Swept" was part of the warning or just an afterthought. In any case, he had plainly heard a struggle here and now there was nothing to be seen. Alert for more brass plates, he wound his way through the streets until he came out on a broad avenue. On the

opposite side were a number of tall, many-windowed buildings like apartment houses. On the sidewalks and small lawns in front, crowds of children were playing. They were wearing low boots, leather shorts or skirts, brightly colored blouses and hose, and yellow capes. Walking quietly among them was a tawny animal with the look and lordly manner of a lion.

It was a lion.

As far as the rapidly dispersing fog let him see, the avenue ran straight in one direction. In the other, it ended a block or so away. Apparently the crooked, wind-breaking streets were only on the edge of the city.

Dan thought of the questions Kielgaard wanted him to answer:

1, how do the Porcyns keep the size of their population down?

2, what is the connection between rejuvenation and Vacation Planet?

3, do the Porcyns have a proper mercantile attitude? Are they likely to make an agreement? Will they keep one they do make?

To find the answers, Dan intended to work his way carefully through the city. If nothing went wrong, he should be able to see enough to eliminate most of the possibilities. Already he had seen enough to make Porcyns look unpromising. The rigid city bound-

ary, the strict uniformity of the buildings and the uniform pattern of the clothing suggested a case-hardened, ingrown way of living.

ACROSS the street, a low door to one side of the apartment building's main entrance came open. The lion walked out.

It was carrying a squirming little boy by his bunched-up cape. The big creature flopped down, pinned the struggling boy with a huge paw and methodically started to clean him. The rasp of the animal's tongue could be heard clearly across the street.

The boy yelled.

A healthy-looking girl of about twelve, wearing a cape diagonally striped in yellow and red, ran over and rescued the boy. The lion rolled over on its back to have its belly scratched.

Dan scowled and walked toward the near end of the street. On less advanced planets, where the danger of detection was not so great, agents often went in with complex, surgically inserted organo-transmitters in their body cavities. Unlike the simple communicator Dan had, these were fitted with special taps on the optic and auditory nerves, and the transmitter continuously broadcast all that the agent saw and heard. Experts back home went over the data and made their own conclusions.

The method was useful, but it had led to some dangerous mistakes. Sight and sound got across, but often the atmosphere of the place didn't. Dan thought it might be the same here.

The feeling that the city gave him didn't match what his reasoning told him.

He crossed a street, passed an inscription on a building:

**Freedom
Devisement
Fraternity**

Then he was back in a twisting maze of streets. He walked till the wind from the sea blew in his face.

The street dipped to a massive wall and the sea, where a few brightly colored, slow-moving trawlers were going out. Dan turned in another street and wound back and forth till he came out along the ocean front. On one side of the street was the ocean, a broad strip of sand, and the sea wall. On the other side was a row of small shops, brightly awninged, with displays just being set in place out in front.

In the harbor, a ship was being unloaded. Flat-bottomed boats were running back and forth from several long wharves. On the street ahead, a number of heavy wagons, drawn by six-legged animals with heads like eels, bumped

and rattled toward the wharves. Behind them ran a crowd of boys in yellow capes, a big tawny lioness trotting among them. On the sidewalk nearby strode a few powerfully built old men, their capes of various colors.

Dan glanced at the displays in front of the shops. Some were cases of fish on ice. Others were piles of odd vegetables in racks. Dan paused to look at a stack of things like purple carrots.

A man immediately came forward from the rear of the store, wiping his hands on his apron. Dan moved on.

The next shop had the universal low boots, shorts, skirts, blouses and hose, in assorted sizes and colors, but no capes. Dan slowed to glance at the display and saw the proprietor coming briskly from the dark interior, rubbing his hands. Dan speeded up and got away before the proprietor came out.

The Porcyns, he thought, seemed at least to have a proper mercantile attitude.

III

DAN passed another fish market, then came to a big, brightly polished window. Inside was a huge, chromium-plated barbell on a purple velvet cloth. Behind it were arranged displays of hand-grips, exercise cables, dumb-

bells and skipping ropes. The inside of the store was indirectly lighted and expensively simple. The place had an air that was quiet, lavish and discreet. It reminded Dan of a well-to-do funeral establishment. In one corner of the window was a small, edge-lighted sign:

**You Never Know What the
Next Life Will Be Like.**

In the other corner of the window was a polished black plate with a dimly glowing bulb in the center. Around the bulb were the words:

**Your Corrected Charge—
Courtesy of Save-Your-Life Co.**

A tall, heavily muscled man in a dark-blue cape stepped outside.

"Good morning, Devisement," he said affably. "I see you're a stranger in town. I thought I might mention that our birth rate's rather high just now." He coughed deferentially. "You set an example, you know. Our main store is on 122 Center Street, so if you—"

He was cut off by a childish scream.

Down the street, a little boy struggled and thrashed near an oblong hole at the base of a building, caught in a tangle of the mysterious ropes.

"A kid!" cried the man. He sucked in his breath and shouted, "Dog! Here, Dog! Dog!"

On the end of a wharf, a crowd of children was watching the unloading. From their midst, a lioness burst.

"Here, Dog!" shouted the man. "A sweeper! A sweeper! Run, Dog!"

The lioness burst into a blur of long bounds, shot down the wharf, sprang into the street and glanced around with glaring yellow eyes.



The little boy was partway inside the hole, clinging to the edge with both hands. "Doggie," he sobbed.

The lioness crouched, sprang into the hole. A crash, a bellow and a thin scream came from within. The lioness reappeared, its eyes glittering and its fur on end. It gripped the little boy by the cape and trotted off, growling.

"Good dog!" cried the man.

Men in the shops' doorways echoed his shout.

"A kid," said the man. "They have to learn sometime, I know, but—" He cut himself short. "Well, all's well that ends well." He glanced respectfully at Dan. "If you're here any length of time, sir, we'd certainly appreciate your looking into this. And if you're planning to stay long—

well, as you see, our sweepers are hungry—our main store is on 122 Center Street. Our vacation advisor might be of some service to you."

"Thank you," said Dan, his throat dry.

"Not at all, Devisement." The man went inside, muttering, "A kid."

Dan passed several more shops without seeing very much. He turned the corner. Across the street, where the boy had been, was a dented brass plate at the base of the building. On Dan's side of the street, trotting toward him, was a big, tawny-maned lion. Dan hesitated, then started up the street.

There was a faint clash of metal.

Swish-swish.

A NET seemed to form in the air and close around him. There was a feel of innumerable hairy spiders running over him from head to foot. The net vanished. Something wrapped around his ankle and yanked.

The lion growled.

There was a loud *clang* and Dan's foot was free. He looked down and saw a brass plate labeled SWEEPER.

Dan decided it might be a good idea to see the Save-Your-Life Co.'s vacation advisor. He started out to locate 122 Center Street



and gave all brass plates a wide berth on the way.

He strode through a briskly moving crowd of powerfully built men and women in capes of various colors, noticing uneasily that they were making way for him. He studied them as they passed, and saw capes of red, green, dark blue, brown, purple, and other shades and combinations of colors. But the only sky-blue cape he had seen so far was his own.

A sign on the corner of a building told Dan he was at Center Street. He crossed and the people continued to draw back for him.

It began to dawn on Dan that he had had the ultimate bad luck for a spy in an unknown country: He was marked out on sight as some sort of notable.

Just how bad his luck had been wasn't clear to him till he came to a small grassy square with an iron fence around it and a man-sized statue in the center. The granite base of the statue was inscribed:

I DEVISE

The statue itself was of bronze, showing a powerful man, his foot crushing down a mass of snapping monsters. In his right hand, he held together a large circle of metal, his fingers squeezing shut a cut in the metal, which would break the circle if he let go. His

left hand made a partially open fist, into which a wrench had been fitted. The statue itself, protected by some clear finish from the weather, was plain brown in color.

But the statue's cape was enameled sky-blue.

Dan stared at the statue for a moment, then looked around. In the street beside it, a crowd of people was forming, their backs toward him and their heads raised. Dan looked up. Far up, near the tops of the buildings, he could make out a long cable stretched from one building to another across the street. Just on the other side of the crowd was the entrance to the main store of the Save-Your-Life Co.

DAN crossed the street and saw a very average-looking man, wearing an orange cape, come to a stop at the corner and look shrewdly around.

Dan blinked and looked again. *The man in orange was no Porcyn.*

The man's glance fell on the statue and his lips twisted in an amused smile. He looked up toward the rope, then down at the crowd, and then studied the backs of the crowd and the fronts of the stores around him, the lids of his eyes half-closed in a calculating look.

A brass plate nearby popped open, a net of delicate hairy ten-

drills ran over him, and something like a length of tarred one-inch rope snaked out and wrapped around his legs. An outraged expression crossed his face. His hand came up. The rope yanked. He fell on the sidewalk. The rope hauled him into the hole. The brass plate snapped shut. From inside came a muffled report.

It occurred to Dan that Galactic was not the only organization interested in Porcys.

Dan looked thoughtfully at the brass plate for a moment, then walked toward the entrance of the Save-Your-Life Co., past display windows showing weights, cables, parallel bars, trapezes and giant springs with handles on each end.

He tried the door. It didn't move.

A clerk immediately opened the door and took Dan along a cool, chaste hallway to an office marked "Vacation Advisor." Here a suave-looking man made an off-hand remark about the birth rate, took a sudden look at Dan's cape, blinked, stiffened, glanced at Dan's midsection and relaxed. He went through his files and gave Dan a big photograph showing a smiling, healthy, middle-aged couple and a lovely girl about nineteen.

"These are the Milbuns, sir. Mr. Milbun is a merchant at present. Quite well-to-do, I under-

stand. Mrs. Milbun is a housewife right now. The daughter, Mavis, is with a midtown firm at the moment. The mother became ill at an awkward time. The family put their vacation off for her, and as a result their charge has run very low. If you can get to their apartment without being—ah—swept, I feel sure they will welcome you, sir." He scribbled a rough map on a piece of paper, drew an arrow and wrote "6140 Runfast Boulevard, Apartment 6B," and stamped the paper "Courtesy of Save-Your-Life Co."

Then he wished Dan a healthy vacation and walked with him to hold open the outer door.

Dan thanked him and went outside, where the crowd was now almost blocking the sidewalk. He forced his way free, saw someone point, and glanced at the statue.

The wrench in the statue's left hand had been replaced by what looked like a magnifying glass.

Dan had gone a few steps when there was a thundering cheer, then a terrified scream high in the air behind him. He turned around and saw a man come plummeting down. Dan gaped higher and saw a line of tiny figures going across high up on the rope. One of the figures slipped. There was another cheer.

Dan hurriedly turned away.

He had already convinced him-

self that the Porcyns had a "proper mercantile attitude." And he thought he was beginning to get an idea as to how they kept their population down.

IV

CAREFULLY avoiding brass plates, Dan made his way along an avenue of shops devoted to exercise and physical fitness. He came to Runfast Blvd. and located 6140, which looked like the apartment houses he had seen earlier.

He tried the outer door; it was locked. When someone came out, Dan caught the door and stepped in. As the door shut, he tried it and found it was locked again. He stood for a moment trying to understand it, but his sleeplessness of the night before was catching up with him. He gave up and went inside.

There were no elevators on the ground floor. Dan had his choice of six ropes, two ladders and a circular staircase. He went up the staircase to the third floor, where he saw a single elevator. He rode it up to the sixth, got off and found that there was a bank of four elevators on this floor.

He looked at the elevators a minute, felt himself getting dizzy, and walked off to locate apartment 6B.

A powerfully built gray-haired

man of middle height answered his knock. Dan introduced himself and explained why he had come.

Mr. Milbun beamed and his right hand shot forward. Dan felt like a man with his hand caught in an airlock.

"Lernal!" called Milbun. "Lernal Mavis! We have a guest for vacation!"

Dan became aware of a rhythmic clinking somewhere in the back of the apartment. Then a big, strong-looking woman, obviously fresh from the kitchen, hurried in, smiling. If she had been ill, she was clearly recovered now.

"Ah, how are you?" she cried. "We're so happy to have you!" She gripped his hand and called, "Mavis!"

The clinking stopped. A beautifully proportioned girl came in, wearing a sweatshirt and shorts. "Mother, I simply have to get off another pound or so — Oh!" She stared at Dan.

"Mavis," said Mr. Milbun, "this is Mr. Dan Redman. Devisement, my daughter Mavis."

"You're going with us!" she said happily. "How wonderful!"

"Now," said Mr. Milbun, "I imagine his Devisement wants to get a little rest before he goes down to the gym." He glanced at Dan. "We have a splendid gym here."

"Oh," said Mavis eagerly, "and

you can use my weights."

"Thanks," said Dan.

"We're leaving tomorrow," Milbun told him. "The birth rate's still rising here, and last night the charge correction went up again. A little more and it'll take two of us to get a door open. It won't inconvenience you to leave tomorrow?"

"Not at all," said Dan.

"Splendid." Milbun turned to his wife. "Lerna, perhaps our guest would like a little something to eat."

THE food was plain, good and plentiful. Afterward, Mavis showed Dan to his room. He sank down gratefully on a firm, comfortable bed. He closed his eyes...

Someone was shaking him gently.

"Don't you want to go down to the gym?" asked Mr. Milbun. "Remember, we're leaving tomorrow."

"Of course," said Dan.

Feeling that his brain was functioning in a vacuum, Dan followed the Milbuns into the hall, climbed down six stories on a ladder, then into the basement on a rope. He found himself in a room with a stony dirt track around the wall, ropes festooning the ceiling, an irregularly shaped pool, and artificial shrubs and foliage from behind which sprang mechanical monsters. The Milbuns promptly

vanished behind imitation vine-covered doors and came out again in gym clothes.

Dan went through the doorway Mr. Milbun had come out of and discovered that the Save-Your-Life Co. had a machine inside which dispensed washed, pressed and sterilized gym clothes for a small fee. The machine worked by turning a selector dial to the proper size, pressing a lever, and then depositing the correct fee in an open box on the wall nearby. Dan studied this a moment in puzzlement, guessed his proper size and put the correct payment in the box.

He put on the gym clothes and went outside.

For forty-five minutes, mechanical creatures of odd and various shapes sprang at him from behind shrubbery, gripped him when he passed holes in the floor and wound themselves around his legs as he tried to swim in the pool.

His temper worsened. He stopped to look at Mavis as she swayed, laughing, on a rope above two things like mobile giant clamshells.

Mr. Milbun shook his head. "Mavis, remember, we're leaving tomorrow."

Just then, something snarled and lunged at Dan from the side. There was a flash of teeth.

Dan whirled. His fist shot out. There was a scream of machin-

ery, then a crash and a clatter. An imitation monster with a huge jaw and giant teeth lay on its back on the koor.

Milbun let out a slow whistle. "*Dismounted it. Boy!*"

"A one-bite, too," breathed Mavis.

Mrs. Milbun came over and looked at Dan approvingly.

Dan had been about to apologize, but checked himself when the others smiled cheerfully and went back to what they were doing. This consisted of dodging, tricking or outrunning the various contraptions that lunged at them, chased them, tripped them, trailed, stalked and sprang out at them from nearly every place in the room.

Finally the gym began to fill up with other people. The Milbuns got ready to leave and Dan followed.

DAN lay in his bed that night and tried to summarize the points he didn't understand. First was the question of vacation. But he supposed he would learn about that tomorrow. Next was "charge." Apparently one went on vacation when his "charge" was low, because the vacation advisor had said, "The family put their vacation off for her, and as a result their charge has run very low." But just what was "charge"?

Dan remembered the flickering

bulb in the store window, ringed by the words "Your Corrected Charge—Courtesy of Save-Your-Life Co." Apparently he had *some* charge, because the bulb had flickered. But where did he get it?

Then he thought of the waterfront and of the little boy caught at the hole. What was the point of that? And why did that produce such an uproar when, a little later, a grown man could get dragged out of sight on a well-traveled street and never cause a single notice?

Dan felt himself sinking into a maze of confusion. He dismissed the problems and went to sleep clinging to one fact. The Porcyns *must* be honest people who would keep an agreement, once made. On what other planet could anyone find a slot machine with no slot, but just an open box for the money?

Dan fell asleep, content that he had the answer to that part of the problem, at least.

Before it was light, he awoke to an odd familiar buzz inside his head.

"Dan," said Kielgaard's voice, small and remote.

Dan rolled over, lay on his back and spoke sub-vocally. "Right here."

"Can you talk?"

"Yes," said Dan, "if I can stay awake."

"Can you give us a summary?"

"Sure." Dan told him briefly what had happened.

Kielgaard was silent a moment. Then he said, "What do you think 'charge' is?"

"I haven't been in any condition to think. Maybe it's a surgically implanted battery, set to run down after so long."

"Too clumsy. What about radioactivity?"

"H'm. Yes, you mentioned a mine on the inner planet. Maybe they mine radioactive ore. That would explain why I have *some* charge. There's residual radioactivity even in the atmosphere of Earth."

"That's so," said Kielgaard. "But not every planet has it. I'm wondering about this other agent you mentioned seeing. He sounds to me like someone from Trans-Space. And that's bad."

"They play dirty," Dan conceded.

"**W**ORSE than that," said Kielgaard's tiny voice. "They recruit their agents from Lassen Two. Maybe that's a break. Unlike Earth, Lassen Two is nearly radiation-free. And Trans-Space doesn't use finesse. They'll pump Porcys full of agents loaded down with organo-transmitters. Visual, auditory and olfactory. They'll broadcast on every wave-length, suck out as much information in as short a

time as they can, then either pull some dirty trick or slam the Porcyns an offer. That is, if everything goes according to plan.

"But meanwhile," he added, "one or more of their agents is bound to stand in front of a free 'Your charge' device somewhere in the city. Very likely, that agent will be radiation-free and some Porcyn, for the first time in his life, is going to see a bulb that doesn't even flicker. If the Porcyns are as scientifically advanced as we think, and if Trans-Space is as dirty as usual, there may be a rat-race on before we know it."

Dan lay gloomily still.

"Dan," said Kielgaard, "where were you standing in relation to the other agent? Did he come up from behind or was he in front of you when you reached the statue?"

"I was in front of him. Why?"

"Because then you were in his range of vision. *He* may not have noticed you, but his organo-transmitter would. The chances are you appeared on the screen back at Trans-Space headquarters. They record those scenes as they come in and their experts go over them frame by frame. Unless you happened to be behind someone, they'll see your image on the screen, spot you here and there in other scenes from other agents, study your actions and recognize

you as an agent just as surely as you recognized their agent."

"Yes," said Dan wearily, "of course they will." He was thinking that if he had been more awake yesterday, he would have thought of this himself and perhaps avoided it. But he couldn't be alert without sleep and who could sleep in a heaving boat in a thunderstorm?

"This changes things," Kielgaard was saying. "I'm going to see if we can get a little faster action."

"I think I'd better get some more sleep," Dan answered. "I may need it tomorrow."

"I agree," said Kielgaard. "You'll have to keep your eyes open. Good night, Dan, and good luck."

"Thanks."

Dan rolled over on his side. He tried for a moment to remember how the other agent had been standing and whether anyone had been between them to block his view, but he couldn't be sure. Dan decided there was nothing to do but assume the worst. He blanked his mind. Soon a feeling of deep weariness came over him and he fell asleep.

IN THE morning, Dan and the Milbuns ate a hurried breakfast. Dan helped Mr. Milbun grease his rowing machine, weights, springs and chinning bar,

so they wouldn't rust in his absence. Milbun worked in a somber mood. All the Milbuns, in fact, were unusually quiet for a family going on vacation. When they went out into the hall, carrying no baggage, they even took the elevator to the third floor.

"Better save our strength," said Mr. Milbun.

The street seemed to Dan to have a different atmosphere. People were walking quietly in groups, their eyes cool and alert. The Milbuns walked in front of the apartment houses Dan had passed the day before, and across the street he saw the place where the chiseled motto had read:

**Freedom
Devisement
Fraternity**

It was gone. Some workmen nearby were lifting a stone slab onto a cart. Dan blinked. The motto now read:

**Alertness
Devisement
Vigilance**

The Milbuns plainly noticed it, too. They drew closer together and looked around thoughtfully. Carefully keeping away from brass plates labeled SWEEPER, they followed a devious route that led to the statue.

The statue had changed, too. The hand that gripped the circle was now hidden by a massive shield. The other hand still held what looked like a magnifying glass, and the motto was still "I Devise." But the shield gave the whole statue a look of strange menace.

Across the street, near the place where Dan had seen the Trans-Space agent, stood several men wearing orange capes, barred black across the shoulders. Nearby, the brass plate opened and a man in work clothes handed out a box and went back in.

At a store entrance up the street, watching them, stood an average-looking man in a purple cape, his look intent and calculating.

Mavis glanced at the statue and took Dan's arm. "Devise-ment," she said, "they won't take you now, will they, before vacation?"

Dan kept an uneasy silence and Mr. Milbun said, "Of course not, Mavis. Where's the belt?"

Mavis glanced at the statue. "Oh."

Dan looked at the statue, then at Mavis and Mr. Milbun, said nothing and went on.

They came to a large building with a long flight of broad wide steps. Across the face of the building was boldly and sternly lettered, high up:

HALL OF TRUTH

Lower down was the motto:

"Speak the Truth —
Live Yet a While With Us."

V

ON ONE side of the stairs as they climbed was a statue of a man, smiling. On the other side was an urn with a bunch of carved flowers lying beside it.

A big bronze door stood open at the top. They walked through into a large chamber with massive seats in triple rows along two walls, and a single row of yet more massive seats raised along the farther wall.

A bored-looking man got up from a low desk as the Milbuns sat down in three of the massive seats.

The man asked in a dreary voice, "Have you, to the best of your knowledge, committed any wrong or illegal act or acts since your last vacation?" He picked up a whiskbroom and pan and waited for their answers.

"No," said the three Milbuns in earnest quavering voices.

The man looked at each of them, shrugged and said boredly, "Pass through to your vacations, live law-abiding citizens." He beckoned impatiently to Dan, turned to scowl at him, saw Dan's

cape, stiffened, looked hastily out to the statue framed by the doorway, relaxed slightly and inquired respectfully, "Is it time for you to go on vacation, Devisement?"

"It seems to be," said Dan.

"I think you should, sir. Then you'd be still more helpful if called."

Dan nodded noncommittally and sat down in one of the massive chairs. His glance fell on an ornamental carving above the big doorway. It was a set of scales held by a giant hand. In one pan of the scales sat a smiling man. In the other was a small heap of ashes.

"Have you," asked the bored man, "to the best of your knowledge, committed any wrong or illegal act or acts since your last vacation?"

He readied the dustpan and whiskbroom.

The Milbuns watched anxiously at a door in the back of the room.

Uneasily, Dan thought back and remembered no wrong or illegal acts he had committed since his last vacation.

"No," he said.

The functionary stepped back. "Pass through to your vacation, live law-abiding citizen, sir."

Dan got up and walked toward the Milbuns. Another bored functionary came in wheeling a cartful of urns. He stopped at a mas-

sive chair with a heap of ashes on the seat, a small pile on either arm, and two small piles at the foot. The functionary swept the ashes off and dumped them in the urn.

A cold sensation went through Dan. He followed the Milbuns out into a small room.

He felt an out-of-focus sensation and realized the room was a mataform transmitter. An instant later, they were in a spaceship crowded with thoughtful-looking people.

LIFE on the spaceship seemed to be given over to silent, morose meditation, with an occasional groan that sounded very much like, "Oh, give me just one more chance, God."

When they left the ship, it was again by mataform, this time to a building where they stood in a line of people. The line wound through a booth where the color of their capes was marked on their foreheads, thence past a counter where they received strong khaki-colored capes, blouses and hose, and new leather shorts and boots to replace those they were wearing. They changed in tiny private rooms, handed their own clothing in at another counter, had a number stamped on their left shoulders and on their boxes of clothing.

Then they walked out onto a

strip of brilliant white sand, fronting on an inlet of sparkling blue water.

Here and there huddled little crowded knots of people, dancing from one foot to another on the hot sand and yet apparently afraid to go in the water. Dan looked to the Milbuns for some clue and saw them darting intense calculating glances at the beach and the water.

Then Mr. Milburn yelled, "Run for it!"

A slavering sound reached Dan's ear. He sprinted after the Milbuns, burst through the crowd in a headlong bolt for the cove, then swam as fast as he could to keep up with them as they raced for the opposite shore. They crawled out, strangling and gasping, and dragged themselves up on the sand. Dan lay, heaving in deep breaths, then rolled over and sat up.

The air around them was split by screams, laced through with sobs, curses and groans. On the shore opposite, a mad dog darted across the crowded beach and emptied people into the cove. In the cove, a glistening black sweep of hide separated the water for an instant, then sank below. People thrashed, fought and went under.

Dan looked up. On the wooden building beyond the cove and the beach was a broad sign:

PORCYS PLANET REJUVENATION CENTER

Dan read the sign three times. If this was rejuvenation, the Porcyns could have it.

Beside Dan, Milbun stood up, still struggling for breath, and pulled his wife and Mavis to their feet.

"Come on," he said. "We've got to get through the swamp ahead of the grayboas!"

THE rest of the day, they pushed through slimy muck up to their knees and sometimes up to their necks. Behind them, the crowd screamingly thinned out.

That night, they washed in icy spring water, tore chunks of meat from a huge broiled creature turning on a spit and went to sleep in tents to the buzz and drone of creatures that shot their long needle noses through the walls like drillers hunting for oil.

The following day, they spent carefully easing from crevice to narrow toehold up the sheer face of a mountain. Food and shelter were at the top. Jagged rocks and hungry creatures were at the bottom. That night, Dan slept right through an urgent buzz from Kielgaard. The next night, he woke enough to hear it, but he didn't have the strength to answer.

Where, he thought, is the rejuvenation in this?

Then he had a sudden glimmering. It was the Porcyn race that was rejuvenated. The unfit of the Porcyns died violently. It took stamina just to live from one day to the next.

Even the Milbuns were saying that this was the worst vacation ever. Trails slid out from under them. Trees fell toward them. Boulders bounded down steep slopes at them.

At first, the Milbuns tried to remember forgotten sins for which all this might be repayment. But when there was the dull boom of an explosion and they narrowly escaped a landslide, Milbun looked at the rocks across the trail with sunken red eyes. He sniffed the air and growled, "Undevised."

That afternoon, Dan and the Milbuns passed three average-looking men hanging by their hands from the limb of a tree beside the trail. The faces of the hanging men bore a surprised expression. They hung perfectly still and motionless, except for a slight swaying caused by the wind.

Dan and the Milbuns reached a mataform station late that afternoon.

A very hard-eyed guard in an orange cape, barred across the shoulders in black, let them through and they found them-

selves in another spaceship, bound for Fumidor, the mining planet.

DAN sat back exhausted and fell asleep. He was awakened by a determined buzz.

"Dan!" said Kielgaard's voice.

"Yes." Dan sat up. "Go ahead."

"Trans-Space is going to try to take over Porcyns. There's nothing you can do about that, but they've landed agents on Vacation Planet to pick you off. Look out."

Dan told Kielgaard what had happened to the agents on Vacation Planet, such as the "undevised" explosion and being hung up by the hands.

Kielgaard whistled. "Maybe the Porcyns can take care of themselves. Trans-Space doesn't think so."

"How did you find out?"

The tiny voice held a note of grim satisfaction. "They ran an agent in on us and he gave himself away. He went back with an organo-transmitter inside him, and a memory bank. The bank stores up the day's impressions. The transmitter squirts them out in one multi-frequency blast. The agent is poorly placed for an informant, but we've learned a lot through him."

"How are they going to take over Porcyns?"

"We don't know. They think they've found the Porcyns' weak

point, but if so, we don't know what it is."

"Listen," urged Dan, "maybe we ought to put a lot of agents on Porcys."

"No," said Kielgaard. "That's the wrong way to play it. If we go in now, we'll be too late to do any good. We're still counting on you."

"There's not very much I can do by myself."

"Just do your best. That's all we can ask."

Dan spent the next week chipping out pieces of a radioactive ore. At night, Kielgaard would report the jubilant mood of Trans-Space. On the following days, Dan would chop at the ore with vicious blows that jarred him from his wrists to his heels.

The steady monotonous work, once he was used to it, left his mind free to think and he tried furiously to plan what he would do when he got out. But he found he didn't really know enough about Porcys to make a sensible plan. Then he began trying to organize what he had seen and heard during his stay on the planet. At night, Kielgaard helped him and together they went over their theories, trying to find those that would fit the facts of Porcys.

"It all hinges on population pressure," said Kielgaard finally. "On most planets we know of, overpopulation leads to war, star-

vation, birth control or emigration. These are the only ways. At least, they were, till we discovered Porcys."

"ALL right," agreed Dan. "Grant that. The Porcyns plainly don't have any of those things, or not to any great extent. Instead, they have institutions such as we've never seen before. They have 'sweepers,' so-called 'vacations' and a rope from building to building. All these things cut down population."

"Don't forget their 'truth chairs,'" said Kielgaard.

"Where you either tell the truth or get converted to ashes — yes. But how does it all fit in?"

"Let's take one individual as an example. Start at birth."

"He's born," said Dan. "Probably they have nurseries, but we know they stick together as families, because we have the Milbuns to go by. He grows up, living at his parents' place. He goes with other children to school or to see different parts of his city. A lion — which he calls a 'dog' — protects him."

"Yes," said Kielgaard. "It protects him from sweepers. But most grownups don't need protection. Only those whose charge is low."

"Of course. The boy hasn't been on vacation yet. He's not radioactive. Apparently you have to

be radioactive to open doors. At the apartment house, the boy comes in a small door to one side. The lions, or what resemble lions, like the children but don't like the sweepers. And the sweepers are afraid of them. All right. But what about when he grows up?"

"Well, for one thing, he has to use the regular doors now. And they won't open unless he's been on vacation. And if he hasn't been on vacation and if his charge isn't high, the sweepers will go out and grab him. That must be what that sign you saw meant. 'Swept' was a warning that there was no escape in that direction."

"I begin to see it," said Dan. "I was safe on that road because the birth rate in that section wasn't high. But in the city, the birth rate was high, so, to keep the population down, the standards were raised. Apparently the sweepers were fed less and got more hungry. People had to go on vacation more often. But what about the rope?"

"I DON'T think we really know enough to understand the rope," said Kielgaard, "but maybe it's a face-saving device. People who don't think they're in good enough shape to get through 'vacation,' and who don't want to die a slow death avoiding sweepers and waiting to go through locked doors, can go across on the

rope. Or perhaps it's a penance. If a man has done something wrong and he's afraid to deny it in the truth chair, perhaps he's allowed to confess and go so many times across the rope as punishment. The people cheered. That must mean it's honorable."

"That makes sense," Dan agreed. "All right, but why don't they just ship their surplus population to the other two planets?"

"We've studied that back here," said Kielgaard. "We think it's because they wouldn't dare. They've got their little mainland allotted and rationed down to the last blade of grass. They can do that because it's small enough to keep control of. Now suppose they try to enforce the same system on a new planet with a hundred times the land area—what's going to happen? They'll have unknown, uncontrollable factors to deal with. Their system will break down. That statue of theirs shows they know it, too. The man in the blue cape 'devises' and his strong right hand does nothing but keep the circle—their system—from flying apart. What puzzles me is that they're satisfied with it."

"There's another point," Dan said, "but I think I see it now. They've got a caste system, but people must be able to move from one caste to another. There must be a competitive exam or some

system of choice. The vacation advisor said Mr. Milbun was 'at present' a merchant. His wife was 'now' a housewife. And no one ever asked my name, though I told it voluntarily to Milbun. It was always 'Yes, Devisement,' or 'Is it time to take your vacation, Devisement?' There were no personal titles like 'Sir Moglin,' or 'First Magistrate Moglin,' such as we've encountered on other planets."

Kielgaard grunted. "That would explain the differently colored capes, too. No one would care if a man was a street-cleaner ten years ago. They'd see his cape was blue and give him immediate, automatic respect."

"Yes," said Dan. "That's it. And no one would dare *cheat* about the color of the cape he wore, because, regardless of his position, sooner or later his charge would be gone. Then he would have to go on vacation. And to do *that*, he *has* to sit in the truth chair and tell the truth or get incinerated." Dan stopped suddenly and sucked in a deep breath.

"What's wrong?" asked Kielgaard.

"*That's* the weak point."

VI

BY THE end of the week, Dan was able to pass through a door with a specialized type of

Geiger counter in the locking circuit.

And by that time, Kielgaard had noted sharp fluctuations in the mood at Trans-Space. There had been an interval of wild confusion, but it hadn't lasted. Many more Trans-Space agents had gone to Porcys and Trans-Space seemed to be on top again.

The instant Dan stepped from the mines through the door marked "Out," he was rushed through a shower, a shave and a haircut, shoved into a truth chair and asked questions, given a new cape and clothes, and buckled into a glittering belt by a purple-caped man addressed as "Reverence." No sooner was the belt in place than all, including "Reverence," snapped to attention.

"Devisement," said a man in an orange-and-black cape, "we need your decision quickly. At home, men have usurped cloaks of devisement and given orders contrary to the public good. They wore belts of power, but did not die when their false orders were given. In the Central City, they convened a council, seated themselves in the Hall of Truth, and on the very first oath every single one of them present was thrown into the life beyond.

"Because the statue was already belted, men wearing cloaks of devisement *had* to give the orders. But now they were all gone. Loot-

ers roamed the streets, breaking in doors. These men were vacation-dodgers — out so long that they couldn't even make a charge-light flicker — and the sweepers cleaned up some of them. *But they killed the sweepers!* Devisement, I tell you the truth!"

"I believe you," said Dan.

"Thank heaven. Devisement, something must be done. A young boy passed and graduated to the devisement cape, but before he could take action, he was shot from ambush. We found an old man of the right cape out in the country, and when we finally convinced him, he rounded up one hundred and fifty-seven vacation-dodgers and executed them. We had things in order, but now a glut of lunatics in devisement capes and belts of power have burst into the streets. Their orders are silly, yet their belts don't kill them. They have no fear of the Truth. Business is stopped and men are hungry. The people are going wild. Strange boats have appeared offshore. Mata-form transmitters of odd design are being set up near the shore. This cannot go on without breaking the circle!"

Dan's throat felt dry.

"Sir," said the Porcyn desperately, "you *must* devise something! What shall we do?"

A faint tingling at Dan's waist suggested to him that he choose

his words carefully. One lie or bad intention and the belt of power would probably finish him.

He thought carefully. The total power of the Porcyn planet must be at least the equal of even the huge Trans-Space organization. And Porcys had its power all in one place. The planet was organized to the last ounce of energy, if only it could be brought to bear in time.

Dan ordered his anxious companions to take him to Porcys.

FAR under the Central City, which was the city he had seen, he found a weary, powerful old man in a light-blue cape and glittering belt, directing operations from a television command post. The console showed street scenes of men in sky-blue capes and flashing belts, who danced and jabbered, their faces aglow with lunacy as they rapped out conflicting orders and the people jerked and dashed this way and that, tears running down their faces.

Near the statue, before the Hall of Truth, close ranks of Porcyn men in orange-and-black capes stood massed on the steps, holding sleek-bored guns. On the street below, gibbering lunatics in sky-blue danced and shrieked orders, but the eyes of the men on the steps were tightly shut. By a technicality, they avoided obedi-

ence to the lunacy, for with their eyes shut, how could they be sure who gave the command?

At the belted statue itself, a man in blue was clinging to one bronze arm as he slammed down a hammer to knock loose the partly broken circle. The statue obstinately refused to let go. At the base of the statue, holding a microphone, stood an average-looking man in a sky-blue cape, his lips drawn back in an amused smile. He gestured to men with crowbars and they tried to jam them between the statue and its base. This failing, they took up chisels and hammers. The man working on the circle shrugged and jumped down.

At the console, the old man looked up at Dan. He put his hand out and felt Dan's belt. Apparently the tingle reassured him and he seemed to accept Dan without further question.

"This is about the end," he said. "When that statue goes, those men will feel the jolt and open their eyes. They're the last formed body of troops on the planet, and when they go, we'll have nothing to strike with. There must be something I could devise for this, but I've been up three nights and I can't think."

"Can you delay it?" asked Dan, grappling with the beginning of his plan.

"Oh, we'll delay it. I've got the

last of the sweepers collected at the holes opening into the square. Just when that statue begins to tip, I'll let the sweepers out. That will stop things for a while. Then they'll kill the sweepers and my bolt is shot."

"Won't the men you've got here fire on those blue-caped fakes?"

"Devisement," said the old man, shaking his head, "you know better."

"Are there any fire hoses? Will your men squirt water on the blue-caped ones?"

"Yes," said the old man, leaning forward. "They'll get shot. But yes, they will. What is it? What are you devising?"

DAN outlined his plan. The old man's eyes lighted. He nodded and Dan went out and climbed with guides through a grim, dark tunnel where the sweepers were kept. He peered out the hole, and as across the street the statue began to tip, he burst outside and sprinted into the square.

The Trans-Space leader raised his microphone.

Dan ripped it out of his hand and knocked him off his feet, then knelt and picked up the heavy shield that had been taken off the statue to get at the ring.

A bullet hummed over Dan's head.

With a rush of air and a heavy

smash, the statue landed full length on the ground. Dan hauled himself up onto its base. Another bullet buzzed past him. Then there was a yell, and Dan looked down in the street.

The sweepers were horrible as they poured from their holes, but they looked almost beautiful to Dan. He glanced at the Porcyns massed on the steps, their faces white with near-hysteria. Their eyes were open and watching him; the Trans-Space men were too busy to give orders.

Dan raised the microphone and his voice boomed out:

"Close your eyes till you hear the roar of the lion! Then obey your true leaders!"

He repeated the order three times before it dawned on the Trans-Space technicians that this was not according to plan. The loudspeaker gave a booming click and cut off. By then, the sweepers had been killed and Dan became aware of bullets thrumming past him. Suddenly he felt weak with panic that the rest of the plan had fallen apart.

Up the street, Porcyn men were unscrewing a cap on the face of a building. They connected a hose. A sky-blue-caped Trans-Space agent ordered them away. The Porcyns turned, wads of wax in their ears, and raised the hose.

A stream of water knocked the





agents backward. Shots rang out. Porcyns fell, but other Porcyns took their places. The stream arched and fell on the Trans-Space agents and abruptly a whirl of color tinged the water. Blots and blobs of green, orange, pink and yellow spattered the blue-caped agents.

At the end of the street, someone ran up tugging a lion by the mane.

"Go, dog! Run!"

Somewhere a child cried out in terror.

The lion roared.

The troops on the steps opened their eyes.

An old man's voice, amplified, spoke out with icy authority:

"Deploy for street-fighting! First rank, move out along Center Street toward North Viaduct. Rifles at full charge. Wide intervals. Use every scrap of cover. Shoot the false-belted usurpers on sight.

"Second rank, move out along West Ocean Avenue toward the sea wall . . ."

Shots rang out.

There was a faint thrumming hum, like wires in the wind, and streaks of cherry radiance crisscrossed in the air.

The lion roared, unable to find the child. The roars of other lions joined in.

Dan was aware that he was lying atop the hard base of the

statue, but he didn't know how he had come to be there. He tried to stand up.

He heard voices screaming orders, then falling still, and a scene swung into his line of sight like something watched through the rear-view mirror of a turning groundcar.

Half a dozen men, guns in their hands, their bodies and blue capes spattered and smeared till they could hardly be recognized, lay motionless on the pavement.

Then the scene swung up and away, and Dan felt weightless. Something hit him hard. His head bounced and he rolled over. Soft grass was in his face. It smelled fresh.

There was a dull boom that moved the ground under him.

He twisted his head to look up.

A massive arm was stretched out over him, its hand firmly gripping the cut edges of a big metal ring.

Somewhere a drum took up a steady monotonous beat.

He fell into a deep black quiet and all the sights and sounds grew smaller and fainter and disappeared entirely.

HE AWOKED in a Porcyn hospital. Kielgaard was there, wearing a broad grin and brilliant Porcyn clothes and promising Dan a huge bonus. But it was all like a dream.

Kielgaard said the Porcyns were as mad as hornets. They had raised a battle fleet and it had taken a corps of diplomats and the Combined Intergalactic Space Fleet to argue them out of personally chopping Trans-Space into fine bits. No one knew what would finally happen, but meanwhile Galactic had its contract and everyone was tentatively happy.

His account finished, Kielgaard grinned more broadly yet and switched on a bedside televiewer.

Dan lifted his head off the pillow and looked at the screen. Then he stared.

It was the statue, solid once more on its base, the ring grasped firmly in one hand and a big wrench in the other. But something seemed different.

Dan at last saw what it was.

It was the face. It wasn't a bad face, if one expected to see strong cheekbones, copper skin and a high-arched nose.

"What a compliment!" he said, embarrassedly pleased. "I — hell, I feel like blushing."

"Make it a good one," said Kielgaard. "After tomorrow, you'll have to blush with your own face again."

"Tomorrow?"

"Sure. You're still working for us, remember."

Dan sank back on the pillow and gazed up speculatively at the

ceiling. "All right, but I want some time off. I have a fat bonus to spend."

"You could use a holiday," Kielgaard agreed. "Why not try the Andromedan cloud gardens? Pretty expensive, but with your bonus —"

"I've got a place picked out," said Dan. "I'm going to take a vacation on Porcys."

Kielgaard started. "You're jok-

ing! Or you've gone twitchy!"

"No. Before I have to give this face back to Surgery, I ought to get a *little* enjoyment out of it. And what could be more enjoyable than hanging around the statue, letting people see the resemblance? Besides, they can't make me take my vacation on the Vacation Planet—I've already had it."

—CHRISTOPHER ANVIL



FORECAST

To put it inadequately, next month's lead story is **THE IGNOBLE SAVAGES**, a novelet by Evelyn E. Smith. To put it even inadequately adequately, one must ask this sober question: Will Evelyn E. Smith Spoil Success? Only it's too late; she already has. The writer of the most stylish prose since Jane Austen, she has reverence only for irreverence. The owner of the brightest wit since Dorothy Parker, she uses it to beam at stuffed shirts. Money is important to her; she considers the stuff funnier than any TV comic. She loves people—with hollandaise sauce. With all this as a background, you may think you can outguess her premise: The planet Snaddra has but one choice in its fight to live belowground—underhandedly pretend theirs is an aboveboard society. No, that's confusing enough. Don't try to figure it out; wait till next month to see who and how and why and what.

Back at last comes Damon Knight with a tense and baffling novelet, **AN EYE FOR A WHAT?** This crew of terrestrial explorers think they couldn't hurt a friendly alien if their lives depend on it—but now their lives do depend on it!

Along with possibly another novelet and short stories and our usual features, Willy Ley disassembles with surgical sharpness and neatness a remarkably persistent piece of superstition in **THE GREAT PYRAMID, THE GOLDEN SECTION AND PI**. Accompanying the surgery is an astonishing amount of back-to-date data on ancient Egypt and inside stories on the building of the most massive structure ever constructed by Man . . . which, as if it weren't impressive enough, has been all but submerged by the most fantastic nonsense ever conceived by Man!

THE BOMB IN THE BATHTUB

By THOMAS N. SCORTIA

*Hate us? The bathtub bomb
was ready to explode with
admiration for all of us!*

Illustrated by MARTIN

THE young man said his name was Sidney Coleman. He looked rather like a smooth-muscle distance swimmer, lately taken to fat. At the moment, his eyes were sunken and wild-looking.

"He said my bathroom was the center of a probability nexus," the young man wailed. "And now there's an H-bomb in my bathtub."

Caedman Wickes rubbed a lean red hand across the scarred surface of his desk and winced at the gritty feel of dust under his palm.

Then he closely inspected the coarse blond bristles on the backs of his fingers.

"Does it do anything else?" he asked at last with great deliberation. "Tick, for instance?"

"Nothing. It just lies there,

eying the hot water faucet with that stupid blue eye and mouth-ing all sorts of platitudes."

"Isn't this all a little ridiculous?" Wickes asked.

"That's what the police thought." Coleman ran blunt fingers through close-cropped black hair.

"No, I didn't mean that. After all," Wickes pointed out, "if you're going to put anything as big as a bomb in the bathroom, the logical place is the bathtub."

"Logical to you, maybe."

Wickes touched his nose reflectively and gestured toward the office door. Its chipped markings spelled in mirrored reverse: *Caedman Wickes, Private Investigator, Specializing in Odd Complaints.*

He said, "In my business, I often encounter the unusual. But there's always an internal logic. That's the guiding principle of my success. Always — *always* look for the internal logic. All else follows."

HE STEELED his fingers reminiscently. "I remember a client who thought he had a Venusian trapped in his washing machine. Very logical, if you stop to think about it. However—" Wickes pursed his lips sorrowfully—"it developed that he was quite mad. A pity, too. Such a lovely idea. Anyway, I meant the

idea of using an H-bomb was ridiculous. The best that such a bomb could do would be to vaporize the city and possibly the nearer suburbs. Hardly worth worrying about."

"He didn't actually say it was an H-bomb," Coleman said tiredly. "I just assumed that's what it was. After all, he did say he wanted to destroy this universe."

"Ah!" Wickes's eyes gleamed. "Not the Universe? Just *this* universe?"

"He made a point of that. He said there are an infinite number of probable universes. He just wants to destroy the best of all possible universes — *this* one."

"Undoubtedly paranoid," Wickes commented.

"Of course. This is part of his therapy. He's insane."

"Then this isn't his universe?"

"I should think not. The cure wouldn't be of much use if he destroyed the universe in which he exists, would it?"

Wickes pursed his lips. "That doesn't necessarily follow. Why, I remember —"

Coleman leaped to his feet and leaned forward, bracing his hands on the desk. "Don't! Don't keep on reminiscing! That thing says it's going to detonate this Tuesday. You've got to figure a way to defuse it."

"Patience, patience," Wickes chided. "It never pays to lose

one's head about these things."

He unfolded his cadaverous six-foot-seven frame from behind the desk, secured a trenchcoat, black wool scarf and stained snap-brim felt hat from the top of a battered filing cabinet.

"I really should smoke a pipe," he mused as he donned the garments, "but I do think the coat and hat are enough of a concession to convention, don't you?"

"I don't give a damn if you wear pink tights and fly through the air," Coleman snorted. "Just do something about that bomb in my bathtub."

Wickes gestured limply toward the door.

"I can see," he said as they walked through the hall, their feet evoking protesting squeaks from the curling boards of the floor, "that you don't appreciate the essential beauty of the situation."

"Beauty? How would you like a bomb in your bathtub?"

"Not the point at all," Wickes reproved. "Now this much reminds me of the client who had a scheme to psychoanalyze his great - great - great - grandfather. Had a theory that neuroses were transmitted genetically. Well, he wanted me to ascertain the old gentleman's whereabouts on a certain day in the early eighteenth-thirties and —"

Coleman was looking wildly to

the right and left as they descended the stairs. Wickes decided to ignore his distress. Besides, the *Adventure of the Retroactive Psychoanalysis*, as he was fond of calling it, helped him develop the proper mood.

He was a little annoyed, as they shared a taxi crosstown, that Coleman displayed such a lamentable lack of interest in bearing his proper share of the conversation. He fidgeted continually and evidenced a tendency to start at any loud noise. Once, when an auto backfired, he almost collapsed.

No resiliency, Wickes thought, and clicked his tongue mentally.

THE house was a small five-room contemporary in one of the newer developments on the fringe of the city. As Coleman unlocked the front door, Wickes stood looking up and down the block.

"Odd," he said.

"What's that?"

"No television antennae."

"You won't find any in this area," Coleman explained. "We're in a dead spot. Not even radio reception. That's why I got the house so cheaply."

As they entered the house, Wickes became aware of a thin atonal humming in the air. It had an odd musical quality without actually approaching melody.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," Coleman said. "It sings."

Wickes raised an eyebrow. "The bomb sings? In the bathtub?"

"In the bathtub."

"How appropriate," Wickes said.

While Coleman removed his hat and coat, Wickes crossed the living room, following the sound through a short hall to a large bathroom, done in shades of coral and rose.

There was quite a large bomb in the bathtub.

It had a single vacant-looking blue eye. It was staring at the hot water faucet and singing.

"You see?" Coleman said from behind him. "The police wouldn't believe me." His voice was shrill and hysterical.

"This is the best of all possible worlds," the bomb said. "But tomorrow will be better."

"Interesting," Wickes said.

"What am I going to do?" Coleman wailed.

"Every day, in every way, things are getting better and better," the bomb intoned. Its humming rose in pitch a fraction of an octave.

"Incurable optimist," Wickes observed.

"You!" Coleman sobbed. "Get out of my bathtub!"

"Can't," the bomb said, interrupting its singing. "No legs. No

arms. I won't," it added after a moment.

It started to sing again. The music was oddly regular, with an internal consistency that Wickes found vaguely familiar.

"What are you singing?" he asked.

"*Frankie and Johnnie*," the bomb said. For the first time, the blue eye moved from the faucet to stare at Wickes. "Like it?"

"Well," Wickes said, considering, "it doesn't sound much like *Frankie and Johnnie*."

"It is, though," the bomb said. "I'm coding it."

"It's giving me a headache," Coleman complained.

"Philistine," the bomb sneered, but the singing rose in pitch and quickly became inaudible. The eye returned to its fixed stare. This time, it chose the cold water faucet.

"You'd better lie down," Wickes advised Coleman.

HE PULLED a tape measure from his pocket and began to measure the relationship of the fixtures in the bathroom to each other. Occasionally he clicked his tongue and made quick notes in a brown leatherette notebook.

Coleman watched him silently.

The bomb continued its idiot stare at the water faucet.

Wickes mumbled something.

"What's that?" Coleman asked.

"Like Count Buffon's needle problem," Wickes said. "The ratio of the bathtub width to the width of the room."

"What about it?"

"Three point one four one six," Wickes intoned. "Pi, that is."

He nodded and pushed the bathmat up against the stool. Thoughtfully, he produced a pair of dice from his pocket. He began to roll them on the floor, bouncing them against the tiled base of the tub.

The dice repeatedly came up seven.

"My advice," Wickes said slowly.

"Yes?" Coleman urged.

"When this is all over—"

"Yes?"

"—I'd tear out the bathtub and install a dice table. Of course, you'd have to change the house rules somewhat, since each throw would be a seven, but—"

He was speaking to an empty doorway. Coleman had stumbled weakly down the hall to collapse in a chair in the living room. From the bathroom, Wickes heard him groan softly.

"This is the best of all possible worlds," the bomb said in a dogmatic tone.

"Is it?" Wickes asked.

"Oh, yes indeed. It has to be. Betcha," it challenged smugly. Then it began to sing again.

"Can't you sing anything but

Frankie and Johnnie?" Wickes asked.

"That was *Down by the Old Mill Stream*."

"It sounded like *Frankie and Johnnie*."

"No breeding," the bomb sniffed. "This is undoubtedly the best of all possible worlds," it added after a moment.

"Why?" Wickes demanded.

"Oh, it just is."

"That's not true, you know. Actually, it's a pretty inferior world."

"It is not! It has to be the best!"

"I'm afraid it's not."

"Lies, lies!" the bomb exclaimed passionately. "I'll give you odds—any odds."

"You mean bet?"

"Of course! Afraid?"

"Why does it have to be the best of possible worlds?"

"Put up or shut up."

"Why the best of possible worlds?" Wickes insisted.

THE bomb was silent. Then it began to hum in a rising crescendo. Wickes walked to the living room. Coleman was sitting in a chair, his head in his hands.

"*Frankie and Johnnie?*" he asked wanly.

"*Down by the Old Mill Stream*," Wickes told him.

"*Mairzy Doats*," the bomb corrected from the bathroom.

"You know," Wickes said, "this

could get quite maddening."

"Why didn't you take the bet?" Coleman asked sarcastically.

"No need to be snide. Besides, I never bet. Still, that bit is significant."

"How so?"

"Well, you can infer certain things about a society whose machines like to gamble."

"Yeah," Coleman said. "Maybe that universe has been conquered by a race of one-armed bandits from Las Vegas."

"Not in the least unlikely," Wickes said. "Except that this one has no arms. Anyway, the world of the bomb certainly knows more about probability than we do."

"Find the internal logic?" Coleman quoted.

"Exactly," Wickes said, with surprised approval. "I couldn't have put it more succinctly myself."

Wickes seated himself in a barrel chair and looked fixedly at the tips of his black shoes. Finally, he rose and walked to the phone on the table by Coleman's chair.

"It's about time," Coleman remarked acidly.

"Tush," Wickes said.

He dialed a number and spoke for a few moments. Then he dialed another number. After a short, low conversation, he replaced the phone triumphantly.

"Hah," he said.

"Hah?" Coleman queried. "Hah?"

"Yes, hah. That was the program director of WWVI. They have a disk jockey on now."

"With a bomb ready to explode," Coleman cried, "he phones requests to disk jockeys. What did you ask for? *Mairzy Doats?*"

"That wasn't necessary. They've just played it. And before that, *Down by the Old Mill Stream*. And before that—"

"*Frankie and Johnnie?*"

"Precisely. I see you understand my methods."

"Yes," Coleman said weakly and sank back into his chair.

"Now I must leave," Wickes said.

"With that still in there? What about me?"

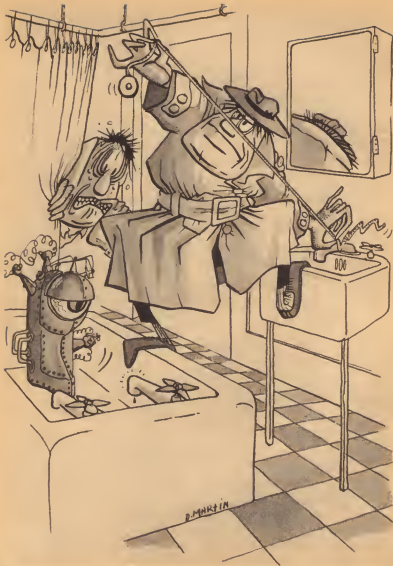
"Well, you could read to it," Wickes suggested.

Coleman stared as Wickes walked to a bookcase by the door and scanned the titles. He selected a book and handed it to Coleman.

"This," he said.

"*Crime and Punishment?*"

"A delightful book," Wickes said. "So full of — of —" He waved his hand uncertainly. "Of *welt-schmerz*. Oh, yes," he said at the door. "If you get bored with that, try *The Seven Who Were Hanged*. A little healthy morbid-ity will do worlds of good—even for a bomb."



And he closed the door with appropriate consideration.

AFTER leaving Coleman, Wickes walked for several blocks, lost in thought. The situation, he decided, did have its intriguing points. The particular problem was the point of contact. Obviously nothing would be gained by merely defusing the bomb. The alien organization of therapists who had placed it there would merely try again, perhaps with more success.

But how to move against those unpredictable minds in the unguessable gamble? Rather like the great - to - the - fourth - power-grandfather acting against Wickes's own psychoanalysis-bent client.

The lever—if only there were some lever. But there was only the bomb with its insane optimism and wild gambling fever and equally insane habit of encoding popular songs.

He stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, heedless of the glares of passersby. In seconds, his head was wreathed in a thick tobacco smoke of concentration. He became aware of his surroundings again only when the pipe stem grew too hot.

He hailed a cab and gave directions to the local branch library. There he spent some time among the math shelves, selecting first

one volume on statistics and probability and then another. Finally he found what he wanted, a long table of random numbers used in setting up random sequences in physical experiments. When the librarian wasn't looking, he stealthily tore out the two pages of the table and left.

Then he went to a magic store, where he bought a deck of marked cards, a pair of trick dice and a book on roulette systems. In the taxi, he read through the opening chapters of the roulette book and finally tossed it from the window when the cab stopped for a red light.

At his office, he made two phone calls, one to a friend who was an electronics engineer, the other to a friend who played the bassoon. Then he scrambled beneath his filing cabinet until he found a battered tape recorder that he used as a dictaphone, drew on the trenchcoat and battered hat, and headed for the street.

After spending three hours with his bassoon-playing friend, he dropped by his engineer friend's house to pick up the pieces of equipment that his friend had assembled for him. He stopped at a drugstore for a quick snack and arrived at Coleman's house at seven-forty.

"It's about time," the young man said. "I'm absolutely hoarse."

He was carrying the copy of *Crime and Punishment*, his thumb inserted in a place about a third of the way through. As he closed the door, Wickes heard a faint muttering from the bathroom.

"Lies, lies," the bomb was saying.

"It doesn't like Dostoevsky," Coleman sighed.

"*De gustibus non est disputandum*," Wickes airily explained.

"Yeah," Coleman said uncertainly.

"I," Wickes announced grandly as he removed his coat with a flourish, "have been learning to compose for the bassoon."

He gestured toward the peeling leather case of the tape recorder, which he had placed next to a featureless black suitcase.

COLEMAN stared at him with lips compressed.

"Oh, hand me my coat a minute," Wickes said. "That's a good fellow."

He extracted several rolled newspapers, which he proceeded to unroll. Several items on the front pages were outlined in black.

"Dostoevsky is all very well," Wickes said, "but we mustn't neglect current events." He smirked knowingly.

Coleman's lips became even whiter.

"Here," Wickes said, handing

Coleman a small package.

"What is it?" Coleman asked hopefully.

"Dice. We may want to get up a crap game."

"Have you gone—"

"Mad? Oh, no. At least, not in the usual sense. Now let me see how this operates."

"This" was the enigmatic black suitcase from which Wickes extracted a bewildering assortment of electronic parts. Following a diagram he took from his pocket, he began to connect the several units together. Eventually, he ran a long wire across the room, hanging it over the doorway and the living room drapes.

"Antenna," he explained.

He found a wall plug and connected the device. Then he began to assemble the tape recorder.

"Wait till you hear this," he said. "Bassoon solo."

"The man has gone batty," Coleman glumly told the walls.

Wickes twisted several dials on the recorder and flipped a toggle on the other device. The room suddenly filled with the low-register grunts of a bassoon. The notes were long and anguished and made absolutely no melody.

Coleman slapped his hands to his ears as the discordance was echoed by a sudden blast of sound from the bathroom.

"You see," Wickes yelled above the maddening cacophony, "the

bomb is in constant communication with its makers. It uses the radio waves that are absorbed in this dead space. That's why you can't get reception in this area. A natural consequence of the probability nexus in the bathroom is to shunt all radiation into the universe from which the bomb comes."

"Yes, but —"

"So we feed it random radio impulses — my bassoon solo composed from a table of random numbers. It can't code a random sequence. Ergo, it can't communicate."

At this point, the bomb made a loud groaning noise.

"Now!" Wickes cried with a wild gleam in his eyes. He charged for the bathroom, a rolled newspaper outthrust before him like a lance.

THE bomb lay in the bathtub, moaning softly. Coleman halted behind Wickes as he held up the newspaper and began to read.

"'Father Slays Family of Five,'" Wickes intoned.

The quivering bomb screamed piercingly.

"'Thousands Die in Wake of Eruption,'" he read.

"Lies, lies, lies, lies!"

"'Indian Plague Takes Million Lives.'"

The bomb began to howl, its

voice rising to an ear-splitting pitch.

"Here! You stop that!"

Wickes turned to the gleaming machine that occupied the space where one wall of the bathroom had been.

"I said stop that," the dark little man in the machine said.

"It's him, it's him," Coleman bleated. "The man I told you about when I came to your office."

"Interesting," Wickes said. He pointed toward the machine's lower quarter, where a small metallic sign glowed. The sign said: "Paranoids Anonymous. 'You, too, can destroy a universe.'"

"Stop it, I say!" the little man yelled, waving what was obviously a weapon.

"Turn off the tape recorder," Wickes told Coleman.

Coleman headed toward the living room.

"What's the big idea?" the man demanded as he descended from the machine. His swarthy face was stormy under thick brows. He was dressed in a pair of shorts and singlet tailored from some metallic material. Calf-length boots encased his feet. A harness of some type encircled his waist and shoulders, and from this harness, various unknown pieces of apparatus dangled.

"This is the best of all possible worlds," the bomb said with the suspicion of a snuffle.

"Of course it is," the man said soothingly. "Don't you let anyone tell you it isn't."

"Any odds it isn't?" Wickes offered.

"Huh!" the man said. But he looked interested.

"Afraid of losing your — ah — shirt?" Wickes demanded.

"Won't do you any good," the man said darkly. "Got to destroy a universe. The best one. This is it."

A small box that depended from the harness buzzed softly. The man removed it, pressed it to his lips and spoke a few incomprehensible words.

"Look," Wickes said, "this has to be the best of all possible universes, doesn't it?"

"It is," the man said smugly. "They planned it that way."

"They?"

"My psychometricians. It wouldn't do to destroy just any universe. It has to be the best."

"I must say you're remarkably objective about it."

"Why not? It's my neurosis, isn't it?"

"Maybe this isn't the best of all possible worlds."

"Ridiculous," mumbled the bomb from the bathtub.

"Best for whom?" Wickes demanded. "By whose standards? Yours?"

"Naturally."

"Want to bet?"

The man licked his lips. "Nobody ever accused me of being a con."

"If it's the best possible world for you," Wickes said, "you should win."

"True, true," said the bomb.

COLEMAN had returned to the room. He was eying the dark man with something akin to horror.

"The dice, please," Wickes said to Coleman.

"What's the idea?" the man demanded.

"I'll prove my point."

The dark man smiled shrewdly. "There's something you should know."

"Never mind."

"Don't say I didn't try to warn you."

"Let's make this interesting," Wickes said. "A little side bet?"

"Done." The man pulled filmy currency from one pocket.

"I can't spend your money," Wickes pointed out.

"You can't win anyway."

"How about something more tangible?" Wickes asked. "One of those gadgets, for instance." He pointed to the harness.

"Roll them from the wall," the man said, extracting one of the instruments.

Wickes sank to one knee and rolled the dice. They came up double fours.

"Hah!" Wickes said.

He rolled three more times. On the fourth roll, the dice came up six and two.

Half an hour later, Wickes had stripped the visitor to his shorts.

The man jumped angrily to his feet. "You switched dice!"

"Prove it."

"I quit."

"Coward! I mean con!"

"That does it. You!" the man yelled at the bomb. "Forget about Tuesday! Detonate in one hour!"

Then he leaped into the machine and it flickered from view.

"Now you've done it," Coleman moaned.

"Today is the finest day of all," the bomb said.

"Hm-m-m," Wickes mused, inspecting the pile of loot at his feet. Finally he selected the box-like communicator that the man had used and inspected it closely.

Coleman sank to the floor and began to roll the abandoned dice dispiritedly. After a moment, he picked them up and examined them closely.

"Hey!" he exclaimed. "These dice don't have any ones, threes or fives!"

"That's right," Wickes said.

"Then how can you throw sevens?"

"You can't."

"But that's dishonest."

"Why? He was trying to cheat me."

AS COLEMAN pondered the question, Wickes began to speak earnestly into the communicator. Before long, he seemed satisfied.

"Well, now," he said, "let's relax. Can you make some coffee?"

"That thing is ready to go off in an hour," Coleman protested. "Do something!"

"Patience, patience. All that can be done has been done."

He walked down the hall to the living room, Coleman trailing him dejectedly.

"At least call the bomb squad," Coleman said.

"Hardly necessary."

"You blasted crackpot!"

"There's no need to be abusive," Wickes said. "If you'll only apply logic, you'll see that certain features of this other universe may be —"

"Peace, my children," said a voice from the bathroom.

Standing in the doorway was the majestic figure of a man. He was tall and very fair, with a light crown of blond hair. His eyes were expressive and ethereal.

"Well," Wickes said, "you certainly didn't waste time."

"I am always ready for a suffering universe," the man said, lifting his eyes unto the ceiling.

"It's in the bathroom," Wickes said.

"I have already taken care of it," the man replied, "while you

two were having your childish tiff."

"Childish!" Coleman cried. "If you think—"

"Peace, brotherhood," the man said. "We must all live in perfect love."

He turned and walked back toward the bathroom.

"Wait," Wickes called and hurried after him. Coleman followed awkwardly, his eyes wide and unbelieving. In the bathroom, the tub was quite empty.

"Love is all-powerful," the saint-like man said. For the first time, Wickes noticed the faint halo flickering above his head.

The man began to mount a machine in the wall.

"Alas," he sighed, "other worlds, other needs. Busy, busy."

Before the machine flickered from sight, Wickes saw the flickering metal sign on the machine.

It said: "Messiahs, Incorporated. 'You, too, can save a universe.'"

LATER, in the living room, Coleman sprawled limply on the divan while Wickes leaned on the mantel and stared dreamily into the dead fireplace, sucking on his unlit pipe.

"I can see how you cut off the bomb's communication," Coleman said, "but why the newspapers?"

"Well," Wickes explained, "it wouldn't have done our paranoid

friend to destroy just any universe. It couldn't be one that was better off obliterated or there would be no point to the therapy. Hence Dostoevsky and the newspapers. I had to demonstrate the world was better off destroyed. That's the only way I could pry the paranoid from his vantage point in his world. Destroy the bomb's conviction that this was the best universe, but prevent the bomb's getting the complete story back to him."

"But that rigged crap game?"

"Well, it was obvious that they set great store by gambling. Moreover, I was certain the box he used kept him in contact with his world. I had only to win the communicator. All else followed."

"By internal logic?"

"Of course."

"Like Venusians in washing machines."

"Naturally."

"Forgive me for being stupid," Coleman said ironically.

"You're just not used to thinking in these terms," Wickes said. "Surely it must be obvious that if there is an organization that aids paranoids by allowing them to destroy a universe, there must be some counter-organization for those poor fellows who want to save a universe."

"Messiahs, Incorporated?"

"Exactly. The internal logic of the situation demanded it. I had

only to contact them. The job was made to order—a universe that needed saving.”

Coleman struggled to his feet. “I think I need an aspirin,” he said weakly. He stumbled down the hall to the bathroom.

Wickes heard his sudden cry of alarm. He ran toward the bathroom. Coleman had collapsed into the bathtub.

The little man in the scarlet-edged toga was waving a dagger wildly. He stopped when he saw Wickes and smiled apologetically.

“Oh, my,” he said. “You *aren’t*

Julius Caesar, are you?”

He moved swiftly toward his machine in the wall.

Before it disappeared, Wickes managed to decipher the flickering sign on its frame.

It read: “Hindsight, Unlimited. ‘You, too, can change a universe.’”

Wickes clasped his hands together ecstatically.

“Lovely,” he murmured. “Simply lovely.”

In the bathtub, Coleman only whimpered.

—THOMAS N. SCORTIA

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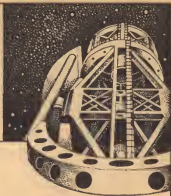
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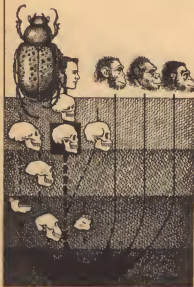
By WILLY LEY

BETWEEN US AND SPACE TRAVEL

ONE of the questions which most frequently crops up in my mail may be worded about as follows: "Just what is it that stands between us and space travel?" The general impression seems to be that there is something specific which either stands in the way or is still missing.

To give a few examples:

One reader was convinced that the solution to the whole problem hinged on the discovery or syn-



thesis of "a metal which will not melt." Other guesses ranged from "the need for the application of atomic energy" via "lack of money" to "the need for volunteers." One reader wondered whether we might not just be holding back for fear of international complications.

The prize letter (written with pencil on yellow foolscap—that kind of letter usually is) was one advising me to drop the subject of space travel once and for all, because it would not happen for a long time to come, if ever. He also knew the reason: Our government had signed a treaty with the flying saucer people to the effect that they would cease kidnaping humans for vivisection if we stopped trying to reach space!

After you have caught your breath, we can proceed to take a careful look at the situation. To make a one-sentence answer, one may say that the same thing stands between us and space travel which prevented Mr. Donald Douglas from building his DC-7 in 1933. It is all the work that still needs to be done.

ASIDE from that, there isn't anything specific to point to. A new and more powerful fuel, one which contains more energy per pound of weight, would certainly be a help and would be welcomed by everybody con-

cerned. But the discovery of such a fuel is not a necessary preliminary.

After all, Dr. Wernher von Braun has shown in various publications that the manned space station, the trip around the Moon, the trip to the Moon with landing, and even a trip to Mars could be accomplished using hydrazine and nitric acid for fuels.

It would be a gigantic undertaking to do it with these fuels, but it is possible. Fuel, therefore, is not the problem.

As regards a new alloy, one which would have a better strength/weight ratio, the story is about the same. If somebody succeeded in producing an alloy somewhat stronger than steel but a little lighter than aluminum, everybody would be happy, of course. But the realization of space travel does not hinge on such a discovery.

To repeat: the whole "art" has to progress for a number of more years to find answers to innumerable detail problems; at one point or another, you may need a new type of thermostat or something like that—something that nobody doubts can be done, but which for some reason had not been done before—and which might prove time-consuming.

But if you insist on the naming of a few specific problems that are known but unsolved at the

present moment, three could be picked out. One is mechanical and in the realm of physics. The other two are physiological and in the realm of medicine.

They are:

- (a) the re-entry problem
- (b) physiological effects of cosmic rays
- (c) the effect of zero gravity

The re-entry problem is precisely what its name indicates: the problem of re-entering the atmosphere. A rocket which leaves the atmosphere has all the natural laws working in its favor. Its velocity increases as it climbs, but all the time it is traversing more and more rarefied layers of the atmosphere. If the rocket does heat up because of air friction, it will be so little that nobody has to worry about it and no special measures need to be taken.

But on re-entry, the situation is reversed. The rocket enters with a high velocity and the Earth's gravitational attraction increases it some more. Simultaneously, the air grows denser and denser and enormous frictional heating is bound to occur.

It is rather safe to say that the re-entry problem is not solved at this moment. But engineers feel sure that they can solve it, provided they have exact and reliable figures to work with. The artificial satellites will provide these figures.

IN THE case of the cosmic rays, a good deal has already been learned, but not enough by far to have a basis for an answer which can be expected to be correct, or at least very nearly so.

The experiments carried out by Dr. Van Allan in the vicinity of the northern magnetic pole for the first time gave figures for the number of cosmic rays in the upper layers of the atmosphere. These figures were such that an exposure of a few days or even a few weeks did not look dangerous, even though they had to be multiplied by two. (The measurements were taken in the upper atmosphere, which means, of course, that about half of all cosmic rays were absorbed by the bulk of the Earth below. For open space, with no shielding planet nearby, there should be about twice as many.) The artificial satellites will either confirm or correct the results of these earlier measurements.

At any event, the cosmic ray "danger" looks more like a bugaboo at the moment, only we don't yet dare say so. Besides, there still exists the additional possibility that medical science might discover a way of healing quickly whatever damage may have been done.

The last point, the effect of zero-g, is even harder to evaluate properly. The opposite of

zero-g, namely the multiple g of acceleration during takeoff, can be duplicated in the laboratory by means of large centrifuges. So this could be investigated and tested and was found not to harbor any insurmountable difficulties.

But zero-g, the complete absence of any gravitational strain, cannot be produced easily near the ground. You can imitate it by way of the so-called parabolic flight of a fast airplane with its engine shut off the instant it enters this flight curve. But it lasts for half a minute at the most, and that is not enough to draw any really valid conclusions.

The customary thing to say is that zero-g must feel like a never-ending fall. Assuming that it does, this still leaves one very important question open. As the statement is usually made, it contains the hidden assumption that the body will not be able to get used to it. But maybe the body will. Just as you tend to disregard a steady noise after some time, that feeling of falling may "disappear" after three or four or ten minutes.

One may also ask whether it actually will feel like falling. We don't have too much experience even in that. But what experience there is is always contaminated by extraneous sensations. The man who jumps from a high diving board sees things rush by and

up at him. The man who makes a delayed parachute jump feels the air tearing his suit and whistling and may fall through clouds. But how does falling feel when *all* these other sensations are missing? Does it still feel like falling?

The answer is that we don't know yet.

But we'll find out. And when that has been done, another barrier between us and space travel will have been removed.

DURABLE FORGERY

A FEW months after the skull of *Eoanthropus dawsoni*, better known to many people as the Piltdown skull, had been exposed as a forgery by British scientists, I had some correspondence with a reader who apparently took this quite to heart. At least, he wrote, this must have been the most successful forgery in the sense that it had fooled the largest number of people and had lasted for a very long time until exposed.

I replied that it certainly had lasted a long time—the "discovery" was announced on December 18, 1912, the exposé on November 21, 1953, giving it a lifetime of 41 years—but I suspected that other forgeries had lasted longer. As for the number of people taken in by it, I pointed out that the scientists of continental Europe had never completely ac-

cepted Piltown man and their mentions of it were usually accompanied by qualifications like "still needing investigation" or words to that effect.

I received a reply which said, "Well, if you don't think that Piltown was the most successful forgery, which one was?"

Without much hesitation, I stated, "Of those I know about, I would say the Königinhofer Manuscript."

Back came the query: "What is the Königinhofer Manuscript?" This was one of those short questions which require a long answer. I promised to let him know in print. And here is the story.

The name of the case is, as has been mentioned, the "Königinhofer Manuscript." This is the German name. The Czech name is "Královédvorský Rukopis." Both versions mean the same thing and the reference in both is to a place name, that of a small town, about a hundred miles from Prague at the Elbe River, which is called Dvur Králové in Czech and Königinhof in German. The English translation of either name is "Court of the Queen" because the town's founder, King Wenceslas II of Bohemia, had given it to his wife Elizabeth. Since Wenceslas II died in 1305, it is an old town, but it never grew to be a large one—only within the current century did its population

manage to pass the 15,000 mark.

Local historians stated that Dvur Králové or Königinhof had suffered in some wars of the past. But they had to admit that it had never been important and that, outside of Bohemia, it was probably unknown.

IT WAS in 1817 that a young man by the name of Vaclav Hanka found an old manuscript somewhere in the steeple of the church of Königinhof. Hanka, who later became librarian of the Bohemian Museum, told interested people that he had thought at first that he had found a Latin chronicle written on vellum. He said that he put it aside to finish whatever it was he had been doing when he came across the manuscript.

An hour or two later, when he was finished, he looked at it again and saw to his surprise that the language was not Latin at all but ancient Bohemian. Looking through it some more, he noticed that it was poetry and not really a "manuscript" as the word is now used, but a "fair copy." It had been written, or copied, by a very careful hand, using inks in various colors. I have seen colored reproductions of a number of pages. They look as if they were engraved; they are far too beautiful to look either printed or written.

Vaclav Hanka took the manu-

script to Professor Josef Dobrovsky in Prague, who was considered to be the greatest living authority on Czech and related languages. After going through it carefully, Professor Dobrovsky saw to it that it was published. Apparently the Czech language had undergone considerable changes since the thirteenth century, the alleged date of the manuscript, for the first printed edition is accompanied by a translation into modern Czech.

The thought that the manuscript might not be genuine does not seem to have occurred to Professor Dobrovsky. The vellum was old and so was the language. And the story of the discovery sounded convincing — a church steeple would be just the place where a manuscript might be first hidden and then overlooked through centuries.

A year or two after the Czech version, a German translation was published. In the course of the years, other translations were made. There was one into French and another into Russian. Then came a revised and improved German edition. Finally, in 1852, there appeared a volume entitled "Polyglotta Královédvorského rukopisu," a collection of translations into most modern languages.

So far, nobody had any doubts. Old Professor Dobrovsky, who had died in 1829, had accepted

it and the other outstanding language experts of the time, like Professors Palacky, Jungmann and Safarik, also thought it was genuine. And it was known especially of Professor Dobrovsky that he was highly critical. About a year after the Königinhofer Manuscript became known, history seemed to repeat itself. One Josef Kovar, paymaster of the estate of Grünberg, had found another old manuscript which was dubbed the Grünberger Manuscript. It was much shorter than the find from Dvur Králové, consisting of just two poetic fragments, the end of one poem and the beginning of another one. But it was much older, dating all the way back to the eighth century!

PROFESSOR DOBROVSKY only saw a copy of these poems made by somebody and at once declared that the Grünberger Manuscript was a forgery. In a letter to an English colleague, he mentioned the Grünberger Manuscript and called it deplorable that some young men tried to foist such fakes upon the world of letters: "Not being satisfied with the Königinhofer Manuscript from the thirteenth century, they manufacture others said to be older so as to outdate the older folk songs of the Germans and others..."

In 1858, there began faint

rumblings in the form of a number of anonymous articles in a German-language newspaper in Bohemia, which doubted that the manuscript was as old as it was said to be. It is doubtful whether many people paid attention to these articles. To begin with, they were anonymous. Secondly, they appeared in a daily newspaper, not in a learned journal or a literary magazine. Finally, the Germans and Czechs in Bohemia were in each other's hair all the time, so that a German attack on a Czech manuscript could be discounted for that reason alone.

THAT the historian professor Büdinger in Vienna openly doubted the genuineness of the manuscript and the story of its "discovery" was more serious. That was in 1859.

Then Professor Julius Fejfalik of Prague went to work on the problem of the historicity of the manuscript and came up with an almost devastating case. The vellum was old, he wrote, but the ink seemed to be much more recent than the vellum. As for the shape of the letters, they were very nearly—but only very nearly—what one could expect of a scribe of the thirteenth century. Besides, they were much too careful—they looked as if they had been drawn one by one, rather than written.

A point which Professor Fejfalik stressed at great length was that the poems occasionally showed an anti-German attitude. As a person, Professor Fejfalik may very well have been anti-German himself, but as a historian, he knew that the German-Czech animosities which pervaded daily life in Prague were comparatively recent; the two nations had hardly been in touch with each other at the time of the alleged origin of the poems.

Moreover, they were supposed to be folk songs and there something else came in. Wrote Fejfalik: "A hero was either a friendly hero or an enemy hero, but the people cared only whether he was friend or enemy and did not think in terms of nationalities."

There was one poem that Fejfalik pounced on especially. It was a song of a peasant girl, complaining that her lover had been "led away" (presumably drafted into somebody's army) and that she would write him a love letter if only she had parchment and some ink and a quill! A letter-writing Bohemian peasant girl in the thirteenth century was too much for Professor Fejfalik's credulity.

After that treatise had been published, most historians were ready to call the manuscript a fraud. But what could have been

a simple exposé of an admittedly skillful forgery developed into an issue involving national honor.

Two Czechs, the brothers Jirecek, violently attacked Professor Fejfalik, who could no longer answer, since he had died in 1862. Professor Johannes Gebauer of the University of Prague, the outstanding expert on Slavonic languages of the time, continued where Fejfalik had left off. He did not say outright that the manuscript was not genuine, but he cited reasons for doubting its genuineness—whereupon his older colleague Martin Hattala called him a traitor.

BETWEEN 1870 and 1880, the line of discussion was as clear-cut as it was silly. If you spoke of the manuscript as having been found in Dvur Králové, you automatically asserted that it must be genuine. If you said it had been discovered in Königshof, you were convinced that it was a forgery.

In 1886, a still comparatively young (36 years) Czech patriot stepped in. His name was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the man who from 1918 until 1935 served his country as first president of the Czechoslovak Republic.

"The manner of controversy cannot possibly be reconciled with honor and truthfulness," he declared, and went on to say: "I

fail to understand how anybody could say that the defense of the genuineness of the manuscript is a question of national prestige and national honor. National honor demands the defense and/or the finding of the truth and it certainly needs more courage to admit an error than to defend one, even if it is deep-rooted in a whole nation."

One might say that the men who really proved that the manuscript was a forgery were the historian Goll and the philologist Gebauer. But without Masaryk's aid, hardly anybody would have heard their voices. Gebauer could show that the poems were not folk songs but were poems in folk style written by *one* man. The grammar was not the Czech of the thirteenth century, but what thirteenth-century Czech was thought to have been in 1815.

During the seventy years that had gone by since then, philologists had learned quite a number of facts not known in Dobrovsky's time.

Professor Goll took the historical hints in the poems and showed conclusively that they did not agree with actual history. Masaryk directed his own criticism at the sociological implications and declared that these alone were grounds for suspicion. He summed up by saying that one would have to "sacrifice the

results of *all* the sciences *plus* logic" to accept the manuscript as genuine.

By 1895, the question was settled. But neither Masaryk nor anybody else could ever prove who had actually written the poems. The chief suspect is the "discoverer" of the manuscript, Vaclav Hanka. As has been mentioned, the language of the manuscript is not what it actually was during the thirteenth century, but what philologists of about 1815 thought it had been. And Hanka, a few years before he made his "discovery," had published a book on old Bohemian, containing just these mistakes. Still, that does not prove that he wrote the poems, for others of the same time made the same mistakes.

The Königinhofer Manuscript, then, was a forgery with a lifetime of about seventy years, nearly thirty years longer than that of the Piltdown forgery. And I could claim a lifetime of nearly a full century if I wanted to include one diehard named Martin Zunkovic. He published a book still defending the manuscript in 1912. His main reason for defending it was that the doubters had based their criticism on printed editions without working from the original.

As if this argument were not weird enough, Zunkovic admitted in his book that he had not seen the original, either!

OUR CAPSIZING EARTH

RECOUNTING the longevity of the fraud of the manuscript of Königinhof made me think of another story which has been around, on and off, for nearly a century now. It is a bit hard to pin a label on it, for it does not really fit into any category. It is, to begin with, not a hoax, even though it is completely without foundation. It is not really fiction, though it comes close to it in content, but not in intent. And it certainly isn't science, though it claims to be.

The story is that Earth is bound to capsize within a not too distant future, say a few thousand years.

But let us begin with the actual scientific facts. The orbit of Earth around the Sun is an ellipse which is so nearly circular that no drawing made on a piece of paper small enough to be handled conveniently can show the difference. But in reality the difference—meaning the actual distance between the Sun and the Earth—amounts to three million miles.

The Earth, when passing through the perihelion (the point of its orbit closest to the Sun) is a full three million miles closer to it than when passing through aphelion—the point of its orbit farthest from the Sun. In the course of one year, the Earth,

naturally, passes through both these points, through perihelion early in January and through aphelion early in July.

The interesting point is, of course, that we on the northern hemisphere are experiencing heat waves just when our planet is farthest from the Sun and freeze when it is closest. It merely proves that the tilt of the Earth's axis is far more important climatically than this comparatively minor difference in the distance from the Sun.

To the inhabitants of the southern hemisphere, especially Australia, things are reversed: They do have summer when closest to the Sun and winter when farthest from it. But like our northern summers and winters, the season is caused by the tilt of the Earth's axis; it just happens to look more "reasonable."

There is one additional factor that should be mentioned. The Earth, like any other planet, moves a bit faster in its orbit when near perihelion and somewhat more slowly when at aphelion.

Consequently the summer of the northern hemisphere is extended a little and the winter shortened by an equal amount.

THUS far, everything that has been said is definitely established. Now we enter the realm

of conclusions which are not completely certain.

The southern summer is shorter and should be somewhat hotter than the summer of a corresponding spot on the northern hemisphere. Consequently the southern winter must last a little longer and should be colder. There are some statistics which claim that this is actually so, but not everybody believes them, for the weather in a specific place is usually influenced by local factors.

But discounting local factors — which is something one mustn't do — the southern hemisphere should accumulate ice under the present state of astronomical affairs. One theory holds that even though the southern summers are hotter, they cannot take care of all the ice which accumulated during the longer and colder winter. Hence ice will accumulate through the millenia — and everybody knows that the southern ice cap of our planet is larger and thicker than the northern one.

But we are not completely done with the astronomical facts yet. Although the axis of rotation of our planet is always tilted by about $66\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ to the ecliptic (or $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ from a line vertical to the ecliptic), it does not always point at the same point in the sky. Right now, it points almost directly at the star Polaris, but 6000 years from now, it won't

any more. The result of this "precession" is that, in the course of the millenia, the situation will shift. In time, the northern hemisphere will have summer when the Earth goes through perihelion and will have winter when the Earth passes aphelion.

If the reasoning quoted before is correct, ice will then accumulate at the northern pole and the ice cap of the southern pole will be the smaller one.

To forestall any possible misunderstanding or confusion, I wish to repeat once more that all this is established astronomical knowledge. The only uncertain point is whether the larger ice cap of the southern pole is solely due to the southern "aphelion winter" or whether it is mostly due to the fact that the South Pole area happens to be high land (under the ice) while the North Pole is at sea level. It may be this elevation of the south polar area which really makes the difference.

Natural philosophy and, with it, a charming kind of fantasy entered the field in 1842. In that year, Monsieur Alphonse Joseph Adhémar, teacher of mathematics in Paris and author of a few mathematical textbooks, published a work which explained all these facts to the readers and then proceeded to solve a few mysteries.

The hemisphere which happens to have "aphelion winter" does

form a larger ice cap, the professor asserted. And because it is so large and massive, it slightly shifts the center of gravity of the whole planet, with the result that the waters of the oceans have a tendency to assemble in that hemisphere.

JUST look at a globe, Adhémar advised, and you'll see how far land extends in the north. But in the south, there is a wide rim of ocean around the ice cap, the direct result of its weight. (If Adhémar were right, all this should be drowned land, which implies a comparatively shallow sea. In reality, it is deep ocean, but that was not known in his time.) Now, he continued, as things go on and the earth's axis slowly points in the direction of other stars, the north is going to get the colder winters. Ice will accumulate around the North Pole and the southern ice will diminish.

And then, one day, the northern ice will be stronger. The last southern iceberg will melt in the warming seas. The center of gravity of the Earth will shift along the Earth's axis in a northerly direction and the waters of the oceans will rush to the north with dramatic suddenness, drowning the land areas around the North Pole which are now dry, even if cold.

Then he drew some additional

conclusions. The last shift must have been from north to south—this is indubitably the event reported in the Bible as the Flood. The shift before that must have been from south to north—this scooped up elephants in Africa and transported them to Siberia. (This was written before complete bodies of the Siberian mammoth had been secured and examined. Adhémar could not know how well adapted the mammoth had been to a cold climate.)

We can leave Monsieur Adhémar alone now; he had to be quoted mainly to show where the later elaboration of his thought originated. The later elaboration, which, as I have mentioned, has cropped up at reasonably regular intervals ever since, adds one more touch. It is not just a question of a minor shift of the center of gravity which makes the waters rush from one pole to the other. It is, instead, a capsizing of the planet as a whole, in which the two poles chance place!

Just why the Earth should capsize has never been explained by any of the many who advanced this as a brand-new and original idea. The Earth is, after all, not a ball floating on the surface of some liquid, but a massive body moving in the gravitational field of the Sun, which is another story entirely. If a very large mass could accumulate somewhere near

the equator of the Earth, it would affect the rotation. But a large mass centered on one of the poles of rotation couldn't possibly have such an effect.

In order to pursue the case to the bitter end, let us see just how large a mass *could* accumulate. Obviously the worst that could possibly happen is that *all* the water of our planet freezes around one pole. It isn't at all difficult to calculate how much that would be.

ACCORDING to the *Smithsonian Physical Tables*, the total land surface of Earth is 153,500,000 square kilometers. The water surface is more than twice that large, namely 365,500,000 square kilometers. The average depth of the oceans is 12,450 feet, which equals 3,795 meters. Multiplying the water area by the average depth, you get 1,388,900,000 cubic kilometers—rounded off, 1,390 million cubic kilometers.

Since one cubic kilometer of water weighs 1,000 million metric tons (or 1,102 million short tons), the total weight of the oceans must be 1,390,000,000,000,000,000 metric tons, which can be expressed better in the space-saving manner of the mathematician by writing 1.4×10^{18} metric tons. (Or 1.5×10^{18} short tons.) This is the maximum that possibly could

accumulate at a pole, simply because that is all the water there is on our planet.

It is no doubt a very impressive figure, but it is not the whole story. We must compare the weight of the water with the weight of the Earth as a whole.

The mass of the Earth as a whole is:

5.983×10^{21} metric tons

or

6.595×10^{21} short tons

As one can easily see, this makes the ratio of all the water on Earth to the planet as a whole like 1400

in 6,000,000 or, if you prefer smaller figures, like 1.4 in 6,000.

In short, the weight of all the water on Earth is negligible in comparison with that of the Earth. Even *if* the Earth were like a ball floating on a liquid (which, of course, it is not), and *if* all the water could freeze near one pole, it would not make Earth capsize.

We may be in for all kinds of natural calamities, plus all kinds of human foolishness—but the stability of the Earth is one thing we do not have to worry about.

—WILLY LEY

HOLD IT!

We mean your collection of **GALAXY**, naturally, which will really dress up your library when they're kept in our handsome gold-stamped binders, instead of just being allowed to accumulate. Arranged according to date, easy to hold, protected from rough handling, your back issues of **GALAXY** will give you continued rereading pleasure . . . and increase constantly in value. Each binder holds six issues and costs only \$1.50 postpaid from Galaxy Publishing Corp., 421 Hudson Street, New York 14, N. Y.

(Continued from page 4)

But the trading in rubles goes merrily on — without the original salesmen being cut in. When Stalin died, the price shot up to more than the currency of some existing governments.

Getting back to insurance for a moment, I've tried any number of times to turn this setup into a detective story:

A worrywart takes out a huge policy insuring him against drowning in the Ganges River. He has never been out of the U.S. and doesn't intend to, because of his fear that the Ganges will be the end of him. Without leaving New York City, he does drown in the Ganges!

It actually could have happened a generation or so ago. A remittance man, the younger son of a rajah, had a palatial home facing Central Park. Being a devout Hindu, he had enough Ganges water shipped to him to fill a fair-sized pool each year, and allowed visiting and expatriate countrymen to wash away their sins in the holy H₂O.

If our hypothetical victim had drowned in that pool, no insurance company could have argued against the invoices and shipping documents. Never worked out as a story, though — why would he take out the policy and how could the murderer get him to the pool believably?

It's commonly thought that only Man is advanced enough to be superstitious, but at least one case of animal superstition has been recorded. A grain truck in Manhattan overturned. Long after the grain was swept up, pigeons were observed doing exactly what they had done the moment of the accident, clearly hoping this had something to do with the miraculous windfall.

I don't know what to do with the Case of the Girl Whose Nose Lit Up During a Performance of *Pagliacci*. In the dark, she fumbled in her purse for a benzedrine inhaler for her cold. What she came up with — and used — was a program flashlight.

And there's the establishment of the International Date Line in 1879, the lifework of a Scandinavian named Alex Andersrag. Naturally, it was known as Alex Andersrag Time Band.

That, in turn, leads to the biology prof who prodded a frog and said, "Choomp!" and the frog obediently jumped. Then the professor cut off the legs and said, "Choomp!" and nothing happened. Turning to the class, the prof explained, "You see? When you cut off der legs, it interferes mit der hearing."

Thanks for letting me unload these mental fishhooks. Now they're *your* problem.

— H. L. GOLD

I am a Nucleus

By STEPHEN BARR



Illustrated by GAUGHAN

No doubt whatever about it, I had the Indian sign on me . . . my comfortably untidy world had suddenly turned into a monstrosity of order!



WHEN I got home from the office, I was not so much tired as beaten down, but the effect is similar. I let myself into the apartment, which had an absentee-wife look, and took a cold shower. The present downtown temperature, according to the radio, was eighty-seven degrees, but according to my Greenwich Village thermometer, it was ninety-six. I got dressed and went into the living room, and wished ardently that my

wife Molly were here to tell me why the whole place looked so woebegone.

What do they do, I asked myself, that I have left undone? I've vacuumed the carpet, I've dusted and I've straightened the cushions . . . Ah! The ashtrays. I emptied them, washed them and put them back, but still the place looked wife-deserted.

It had been a bad day; I had forgotten to wind the alarm clock, so I'd had to hurry to make a story conference at one of the TV studios I write for. I didn't notice the impending rain storm and had no umbrella when I reached the sidewalk, to find myself confronted with an almost tropical downpour. I would have turned back, but a taxi came up and a woman got out, so I dashed through the rain and got in.

"Madison and Fifty-fourth," I said.

"Right," said the driver, and I heard the starter grind, and then go on grinding. After some futile efforts, he turned to me. "Sorry, Mac. You'll have to find another cab. Good hunting."

If possible, it was raining still harder. I opened my newspaper over my hat and ran for the subway: three blocks. Whizzing traffic held me up at each crossing and I was soaked when I reached the platform, just in time to miss the local. After an abnormal de-

lay, I got one which exactly missed the express at Fourteenth Street. The same thing happened at both ends of the crosstown shuttle, but I found the rain had stopped when I got out at Fifty-first and Lexington.

AS I walked across to Madison Avenue, I passed a big excavation where they were getting ready to put up a new office building. There was the usual crowd of buffs watching the digging machines and, in particular, a man with a pneumatic drill who was breaking up some hard-packed clay. While I looked, a big lump of it fell away, and for an instant I was able to see something that looked like a chunk of dirty glass, the size of an old-fashioned hatbox. It glittered brilliantly in the sunlight, and then his chattering drill hit it.

There was a faint bang and the thing disintegrated. It knocked him on his back, but he got right up and I realized he was not hurt. At the moment of the explosion — if so feeble a thing can be called one — I felt something sting my face and, on touching it, found blood on my hand. I mopped at it with my handkerchief but, though slight, the bleeding would not stop, so I went into a drugstore and bought some pink adhesive which I put on the tiny cut. When I got to the studio, I

found that I had missed the story conference.

During the day, by actual count, I heard the phrase "I'm just spitballing" eight times, and another Madison Avenue favorite, "The whole ball of wax," twelve times. However, my story had been accepted without change because nobody had noticed my absence from the conference room. There you have what is known as the Advertising World, the Advertising game or the advertising racket, depending upon which rung of the ladder you have achieved.

The subway gave a repeat performance going home, and as I got to the apartment house we live in, the cop on the afternoon beat was standing there talking to the doorman.

He said, "Hello, Mr. Graham. I guess you must have just have missed it at your office building." I looked blank and he explained, "We just heard it a little while ago: all six elevators in your building jammed at the same time. Sounds crazy. I guess you just missed it."

Anything can happen in advertising, I thought. "That's right, Danny, I just missed it," I said, and went on in.

Psychiatry tells us that some people are accident-prone; I, on the other hand, seemed recently to be coincidence-prone, fluke-

happy, and except for the alarm clock, I'd had no control over what had been going on.

I went into our little kitchen to make a drink and reread the directions Molly had left, telling me how to get along by myself until she got back from her mother's in Oyster Bay, a matter of ten days. How to make coffee, how to open a can, whom to call if I took sick and such. My wife used to be a trained nurse and she is quite convinced that I cannot take a breath without her. She is right, but not for the reasons she supposes.

I opened the refrigerator to get some ice and saw another notice: "When you take out the Milk or Butter, Put it Right Back. And Close the Door, too."

Intimidated, I took my drink into the living room and sat down in front of the typewriter. As I stared at the novel that was to liberate me from Madison Avenue, I noticed a mistake and picked up a pencil. When I put it down, it rolled off the desk, and with my eyes on the manuscript, I groped under the chair for it. Then I looked down. The pencil was standing on its end.

THERE, I thought to myself, is that one chance in a million we hear about, and picked up the pencil. I turned back to my novel and drank some of the highball

in hopes of inspiration and surcease from the muggy heat, but nothing came. I went back and read the whole chapter to try to get a forward momentum, but came to a dead stop at the last sentence.

Damn the heat, damn the pencil, damn Madison Avenue and advertising. My drink was gone and I went back to the kitchen and read Molly's notes again to see if they would be like a letter from her. I noticed one that I had missed, pinned to the door of the dumbwaiter: "Garbage picked up at 6:30 AM so the idea is to Put it Here the Night Before I love you." What can you do when the girl loves you?

I made another drink and went and stared out of the living room window at the roof opposite. The Sun was out again and a man with a stick was exercising his flock of pigeons. They wheeled in a circle, hoping to be allowed to perch, but were not allowed to.

Pigeons fly as a rule in formation and turn simultaneously, so that their wings all catch the sunlight at the same time. I was thinking about this decorative fact when I saw that as they were making a turn, they seemed to bunch up together. By some curious chance, they all wanted the same place in the sky to turn in, and several collided and fell.

The man was as surprised as I and went to one of the dazed birds and picked it up. He stood there shaking his head from side to side, stroking its feathers.

My speculations about this peculiar aerial traffic accident were interrupted by loud voices in the hallway. Since our building is usually very well behaved, I was astonished to hear what sounded like an incipient free-for-all, and among the angry voices I recognized that of my neighbor, Nat, a very quiet guy who works on a newspaper and has never, to my knowledge, given wild parties, particularly in the late afternoon.

"You can't say a thing like that to me!" I heard him shout. "I tell you I got that deck this afternoon and they weren't opened till we started to play!"

Several other loud voices started at the same time.

"Nobody gets five straight-flushes in a row!"

"Yeah, and only when you were dealer!"

The tone of the argument was beginning to get ugly, and I opened the door to offer Nat help if he needed it. There were four men confronting him, evidently torn between the desire to make an angry exit and the impulse to stay and beat him up. His face was furiously red and he looked stunned.

"Here!" he said, holding out a deck of cards, "For Pete's sake, look at 'em yourselves if you think they're marked!"

The nearest man struck them up from his hand. "Okay, Houdini! So they're not marked! All I know is five straight . . ."

His voice trailed away. He and the others stared at the scattered cards on the floor. About half were face down, as might be expected, and the rest face up — all red.

SOMEONE must have rung, because at that moment the elevator arrived and the four men, with half frightened, incredulous looks, and in silence, got in and were taken down. My friend stood looking at the neatly arranged cards.

"Judas!" he said, and started to pick them up. "Will you look at that! My God, what a session . . ."

I helped him and said to come in for a drink and tell me all about it, but I had an idea what I would hear.

After a while, he calmed down, but he still seemed dazed.

"Never seen anything to equal it," he said. "Wouldn't have believed it. Those guys *didn't* believe it. Every round normal, nothing unusual about the hands — three of a kind, a low straight, that sort of thing and one guy

got queens over tens, until it gets to be *my* deal. Brother! Straight flush to the king — every time! And each time, somebody else has four aces . . ."

He started to sweat again, so I got up to fix him another drink. There was one quart of club soda left, but when I tried to open it, the top broke and glass chips got into the bottle.

"I'll have to go down for more soda," I said.

"I'll come, too. I need air."

At the delicatessen on the corner, the man gave me three bottles in what must have been a wet bag, because as he handed them to me over the top of the cold-meat display, the bottom gave and they fell onto the tile floor. None of them broke, although the fall must have been from at least five feet. Nat was too wound up in his thoughts to notice and I was getting used to miracles. We left the proprietor with his mouth open and met Danny, the cop, looking in at the door, also with his mouth open.

On the sidewalk, a man walking in front of Nat stooped suddenly to tie his shoe and Nat, to avoid bumping him, stepped off the curb and a taxi swerved to avoid Nat. The street was still wet and the taxi skidded, its rear end lightly flipping the front of one of those small foreign cars, which was going father fast. It

turned sideways and, without any side-slip, went right up the stoop of a brownstone opposite, coming to rest with its nose inside the front door, which a man opened at that moment.

The sight of this threw another driver into a skid, and when he and the taxi had stopped sliding around, they were face to face, arranged crosswise to the street. This gave them exactly no room to move either forward or backward, for the car had its back to a hydrant and the taxi to a lamp.

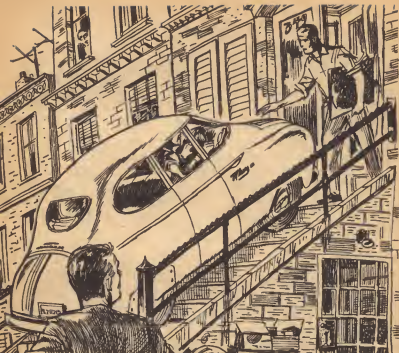
Although rather narrow, this is a two-way street, and in no time at all, traffic was stacked up from both directions as far as the avenues. Everyone was honking his horn.

Danny was furious — more so when he tried to put through a call to his station house from the box opposite.

It was out of order.

UPSTAIRS, the wind was blowing into the apartment and I closed the windows, mainly





to shut out the tumult and the shouting. Nat had brightened up considerably.

"I'll stay for one more drink and then I'm due at the office," he said. "You know, I think this would make an item for the paper." He grinned and nodded toward the pandemonium.

When he was gone, I noticed it was getting dark and turned on the desk lamp. Then I saw the

curtains. They were all tied in knots, except one. That was tied in three knots.

All right, I told myself, it was the wind. But I felt the time had come for me to get expert advice, so I went to the phone to call McGill. McGill is an assistant professor of mathematics at a university uptown and lives near us. He is highly imaginative, but we believe he knows everything.

When I picked up the receiver, the line sounded dead and I thought, *more trouble*. Then I heard a man cough and I said hello. McGill's voice said, "Alec? You must have picked up the receiver just as we were connected. That's a damn funny coincidence."

"Not in the least," I said. "Come on over here. I've got something for you to work on."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I was calling up to ask you and Molly —"

"Molly's away for the week. Can you get over here quick? It's urgent."

"At once," he said, and hung up.

While I waited, I thought I might try getting down a few paragraphs of my novel — perhaps something would come now. It did, but as I came to a point where I was about to put down the word "agurgling," I decided it was too reminiscent of Gilbert and Sullivan, and stopped at the letter "R." Then I saw that I had unaccountably hit all four keys one step to the side of the correct ones, and tore out the page, with my face red.

This was absolutely not my day.

"**W**ELL," McGill said, "nothing you've told me is impossible or supernatural. Just

very, very improbable. In fact, the odds against that poker game alone would lead me to suspect Nat, well as I know him. It's all those other things . . ."

He got up and walked over to the window and looked at the hot twilight while I waited. Then he turned around; he had a look of concern.

"Alec, you're a reasonable guy, so I don't think you'll take offense at what I'm going to say. What you have told me is so impossibly unlikely, and the odds against it so astronomical, that I must take the view that you're either stringing me or you're subject to a delusion." I started to get up and expostulate, but he motioned me back. "I know, but don't you see that that is far more likely than . . ." He stopped and shook his head. Then he brightened. "I have an idea. Maybe we can have a demonstration."

He thought for a tense minute and snapped his fingers. "Have you any change on you?"

"Why, yes," I said. "Quite a bit." I reached into my pocket. There must have been nearly two dollars in silver and pennies. "Do you think they'll each have the same date, perhaps?"

"Did you accumulate all that change today?"

"No. During the week."

He shook his head. "In that

case, no. Discounting the fact that you could have prearranged it, if my dim provisional theory is right, that would be *actually* impossible. It would involve time-reversal. I'll tell you about it later. No, just throw down the change. Let's see if they all come up heads."

I moved away from the carpet and tossed the handful of coins onto the floor. They clattered and bounced — and bounced together — and stacked themselves into a neat pile.

I looked at McGill. His eyes were narrowed. Without a word, he took a handful of coins from his own pocket and threw them.

These coins didn't stack. They just fell into an exactly straight line, the adjacent ones touching.

"Well," I said, "what more do you want?"

"Great Scott," he said, and sat down. "I suppose you know that there are two great apparently opposite principles governing the Universe — random and design. The sands on the beach are an example of random distribution and life is an example of design. The motions of the particles of a gas are what we call random, but there are so many of them, we treat them statistically and derive the Second Law of Thermodynamics — quite reliable. It isn't theoretically hard-and-fast; it's just a matter of extreme probabil-

ity. Now life, on the other hand, seems not to depend on probability at all; actually, it goes against it. Or you might say it is certainly not an accidental manifestation."

"Do you mean," I asked in some confusion, "that some form of life is controlling the coins and — the other things?"

HE SHOOK his head. "No. All I mean is that improbable things usually have improbable explanations. When I see a natural law being broken, I don't say to myself, 'Here's a miracle.' I revise my version of the book of rules. Something — I don't know what — is going on, and it seems to involve probability, and it seems to center around you. Were you still in that building when the elevators stuck? Or near it?"

"I guess I must have been. It happened just after I left."

"Hm. You're the center, all right. But why?"

"Center of what?" I asked. "I feel as though I were the center of an electrical storm. Something has it in for me!"

McGill grinned. "Don't be superstitious. And especially don't be anthropomorphic."

"Well, if it's the opposite of random, it's got to be a form of life."

"On what basis? All we know for certain is that random motions

are being rearranged. A crystal, for example, is not life, but it's a non-random arrangement of particles . . . I wonder." He had a faraway, frowning look.

I was beginning to feel hungry and the drinks had worn off.

"Let's go out and eat," I said, "There's not a damn thing in the kitchen and I'm not allowed to cook. Only eggs and coffee."

We put on our hats and went down to the street. From either end, we could hear wrecking trucks towing away the stalled cars. There were, by this time, a number of harassed cops directing the maneuver and we heard one of them say to Danny, "I don't know what the hell's going on around here. Every goddam car's got something the matter with it. They can't none of them back out for one reason or another. Never seen anything like it."

Near us, two pedestrians were doing a curious little two-step as they tried to pass one another; as soon as one of them moved aside to let the other pass, the other would move to the same side. They both had embarrassed grins on their faces, but before long their grins were replaced by looks of suspicion and then determination.

"All right, smart guy!" they shouted in unison, and barged ahead, only to collide. They

backed off and threw simultaneous punches which met in mid-air. Then began one of the most remarkable bouts ever witnessed — a fight in which fist hit fist but never anything else, until both champions backed away undefeated, muttering identical excuses and threats.

DANNY appeared at that moment. His face was dripping.

"You all right, Mr. Graham?" he asked. "I don't know what's going on around here, but ever since I came on this afternoon, things are going crazy. Bartley!" he shouted — he could succeed as a hog-caller. "Bring those dames over here!"

Three women in a confused wrangle, with their half-open umbrellas intertwined, were brought across the street, which meant climbing over fenders. Bartley, a fine young patrolman, seemed self-conscious; the ladies seemed not to be.

"All right, now, Mrs. Mac-Philip!" one of them said. "Leave go of my umbrella and we'll say no more about it!"

"And so now it's Missus Mac-Philip, is it?" said her adversary.

The third, a younger one with her back turned to us, her umbrella also caught in the tangle, pulled at it in a tentative way, at which the other two glared at her. She turned her head away

and tried to let go, but the handle was caught in her glove. She looked up and I saw it was Molly. My nurse-wife.

"Oh, Alec!" she said, and managed to detach herself. "Are you all right?" Was I all right!

"Molly! What are you doing here?"

"I was so worried, and when I saw all this, I didn't know what to think." She pointed to the stalled cars. "Are you really all right?"

"Of course I'm all right. But why . . ."

"The Oyster Bay operator said someone kept dialing and dialing Mother's number and there wasn't anyone on the line, so then she had it traced and it came from our phone here. I kept calling up, but I only got a busy signal. Oh, dear, are you *sure* you're all right?"

I put my arm around her and glanced at McGill. He had an inward look. Then I caught Danny's eye. It had a thoughtful, almost suspicious cast to it.

"Trouble does seem to follow you, Mr. Graham," was all he said.

When we got upstairs, I turned to McGill. "Explain to Molly," I said. "And incidentally to me. I'm not properly briefed yet."

He did so, and when he got to the summing up, I had the feeling she was a jump ahead of him.

"In other words, you think it's something organic?"

"Well," McGill said, "I'm trying to think of anything else it might be. I'm not doing so well," he confessed.

"But so far as I can see," Molly answered, "it's mere probability, and without any over-all pattern."

"Not quite. It has a center. Alec is the center."

MOLLY looked at me with a curious expression for a moment. "Do you *feel* all right, darling?" she asked me. I nodded brightly. "You'll think this silly of me," she went on to McGill, "but why isn't it something like an overactive poltergeist?"

"Pure concept," he said. "No genuine evidence."

"Magnetism?"

"Absolutely not. For one thing, most of the objects affected weren't magnetic — and don't forget magnetism is a force, not a form of energy, and a great deal of energy has been involved. I admit the energy has mainly been supplied by the things themselves, but in a magnetic field, all you'd get would be stored kinetic energy, such as when a piece of iron moves to a magnet or a line of force. Then it would just stay there, like a rundown clock weight. These things do a lot more than that — they go on moving."

"Why did you mention a crystal before? Why not a life-form?"

"Only an analogy," said McGill. "A crystal resembles life in that it has a definite shape and exhibits growth, but that's all. I'll agree this — thing — has no discernible shape and motion is involved, but plants don't move and amebas have no shape. Then a crystal feeds, but it does not convert what it feeds on; it merely rearranges it into a non-random pattern. In this case, it's rearranging random motions and it has a nucleus and it seems to be growing — at least in what you might call improbability."

Molly frowned. "Then what is it? What's it made of?"

"I should say it was made of the motions. There's a similar idea about the atom. Another thing that's like a crystal is that it appears to be forming around a nucleus not of its own material — the way a speck of sand thrown into a supersaturated solution becomes the nucleus of crystallization."

"Sounds like the pearl in an oyster," Molly said, and gave me an impertinent look.

"Why," I asked McGill, "did you say the coins couldn't have the same date? I mean apart from the off chance I got them that way."

"Because I don't think this thing got-going before today and

everything that's happened can all be described as improbable motions here and now. The dates were already there, and to change them would require retroactive action, reversing time. That's out, in my book. That telephone now —"

The doorbell rang. We were not surprised to find it was the telephone repairman. He took the set apart and clucked like a hen.

"I guess you dropped it on the floor, mister," he said with strong disapproval.

"Certainly not," I said. "Is it broken?"

"Not exactly *broken*, but —" He shook his head and took it apart some more.

McGILL went over and they discussed the problem in undertones. Finally the man left and Molly called her mother to reassure her. McGill tried to explain to me what had happened with the phone.

"You must have joggled something loose. And then you replaced the receiver in such a way that the contact wasn't quite open."

"But for Pete's sake, Molly says the calls were going on for a long time! I phoned you only a short time ago and it must have taken her nearly two hours to get here from Oyster Bay."

"Then you must have done it

twice and the vibrations in the floor — something like that — just happened to cause the right induction impulses. Yes, I know how you feel," he said, seeing my expression. "It's beginning to bear down."

Molly was through telephoning and suggested going out for dinner. I was so pleased to see her that I'd forgotten all about being hungry.

"I'm in no mood to cook," she said. "Let's get away from all this."

McGill raised an eyebrow. "If all this, as you call it, will let us."

In the lobby, we ran into Nat, looking smug in a journalistic way.

"I've been put on the story — who could be better? — I live here. So far, I don't quite get what's been happening. I've been talking to Danny, but he didn't say much. I got the feeling he thinks you're involved in some mystical, Hibernian way. Hello, McGill, what's with you?"

"He's got a theory," said Molly. "Come and eat with us and he'll tell you all about it."

Since we decided on an air-conditioned restaurant nearby on Sixth Avenue, we walked. The jam of cars didn't seem to be any less than before and we saw Danny again. He was talking to a police lieutenant, and when he caught sight of us, he said some-

thing that made the lieutenant look at us with interest. Particularly at me.

"If you want your umbrella, Mrs. Graham," Danny said, "it's at the station house. What there's left of it, that is."

Molly thanked him and there was a short pause, during which I felt the speculative regard of the lieutenant. I pulled out a packet of cigarettes, which I had opened, as always, by tearing off the top. I happened to have it upside down and all the cigarettes fell out. Before I could move my foot to obliterate what they had spelt out on the sidewalk, the two cops saw it. The lieutenant gave me a hard look, but said nothing. I quickly kicked the insulting cigarettes into the gutter.

When we got to the restaurant, it was crowded but cool — although it didn't stay cool for long. We sat down at a side table near the door and ordered Tom Colinses as we looked at the menu. Sitting at the next table were a fat lady, wearing a very long, brilliant green evening gown, and a dried-up sour-looking man in a tux. When the waiter returned, they preempted him and began ordering dinner fussily: cold cuts for the man, and vichyssoise, lobster salad and strawberry parfait for the fat lady.

I tasted my drink. It was most peculiar; salt seemed to have

been used instead of sugar. I mentioned this and my companions tried theirs, and made faces.

THE WAITER was concerned and apologetic, and took the drinks back to the bar across the room. The bartender looked over at us and tasted one of the drinks. Then he dumped them in his sink with a puzzled expression and made a new batch. After shaking this up, he set out a row of glasses, put ice in them and began to pour.

That is to say he tilted the shaker over the first one, but nothing came out. He bumped it against the side of the bar and tried again. Still nothing. Then he took off the top and pried into it with his pick, his face pink with exasperation.

I had the impression that the shaker had frozen solid. Well, ice is a crystal, I thought to myself.

The other bartender gave him a fresh shaker, but the same thing happened, and I saw no more because the customers sitting at the bar crowded around in front of him, offering advice. Our waiter came back, baffled, saying he'd have the drinks in a moment, and went to the kitchen. When he returned, he had madame's vichyssoise and some rolls, which he put down, and then went to the bar, where the audience had grown larger.

Molly lit a cigarette and said, "I suppose this is all part of it, Alec. Incidentally, it seems to be getting warmer in here."

It was, and I had the feeling the place was quieter — a background noise had stopped. It dawned on me that I no longer heard the faint hum of the air-conditioner over the door, and as I started to say so, I made a gesture toward it. My hand collided with Molly's when she tapped her cigarette over the ashtray, and the cigarette landed in the neighboring vichyssoise.

"Hey! What's the idea?" snarled the sour-looking man.

"I'm terribly sorry," I said. "It was an accident. I —"

"Throwing cigarettes at people!" the fat lady said.

"I really didn't mean to," I began again, getting up. There must have been a hole in the edge of their tablecloth which one of my cuff buttons caught in, because as I stepped out from between the closely set tables, I pulled everything — tablecloth, silver, water glasses, ashtrays and the vichyssoise-à-la-nicotine—onto the floor.

The fat lady surged from the banquette and slapped me meatily. The man licked his thumb and danced as boxers are popularly supposed to do. The owner of the place, a man with thick black eyebrows, hustled toward

us with a determined manner. I tried to explain what had happened, but I was outshouted, and the owner frowned darkly.

ONE OF the waiters came up to the owner and tapped him on the shoulder and started to tell him about the air-conditioner, thus creating a momentary diversion, which did not, however, include the fat lady.

"He must be drunk!" she told her companion, who nodded contemptuously. A man carrying a stepladder came down the aisle from the back, his eye on the air-conditioner, but not, it seemed, on the stepladder, which bumped the owner of the restaurant on the shoulder just as he was turning back to me.

It was not a hard bump, but it threw him off balance, so that he more or less embraced the waiter. Then he turned around and it was obvious he thought I had struck him. The room was now divided into two groups: ourselves and our audience, and those who were too far away or intent on other matters to have noticed the fracas, the chief of these being the man with the stepladder, who was paying undivided attention to the air-conditioner. The owner was very angry with me.

"Mister, I think you'd better leave!" he said.

"He will not!" Molly said. "It was an accident, and you," she added to the fat lady who was about to interrupt, "keep quiet! We'll buy you some more soup!"

"Maybe it was an accident like you say," the owner declared, "but no one's going to push me when my back is turned! Out you go, mister! The drinks are on the house."

"We haven't had any drinks yet," I said. "There was salt in them."

"What d'you mean, salt? My bartenders —"

The air-conditioner suddenly let out a loud whirring and I glanced up. The stepladder which the man was on began to slide open like an acrobatic dancer doing a split. I stepped past the angry restaurateur and put out my hand to stop it, but as I did, the extension-bar that was supposed to hold it together parted and it came down with a rush, knocking over several tables. The repairman pulled part of the works out with him as he fell and the fan-belt broke. The motor raced and black smoke poured out.

"What're you trying to do!" the owner yelled at me over the loud whine of the machinery. "Goddam it, haven't you done enough already?"

I took two steps back, in dismay at what I was accused of,

and stepped on the skirt of the fat lady's green evening gown. She in turn took two steps and was, as it were, laid bare.

The previous hubbub was as nothing to what now resulted and the smoke was becoming thicker. Then the door opened and, to my horror, Danny and his lieutenant came in, and I was the first thing their eyes fastened on. Everyone started shouting at once and pointing at me.

Then the sprinkler system went on.

THE CELL was clean, although very hot, and I was not treated badly. There was, in fact, an air of superstitious respect, almost. A cop gave me some magazines and, against regulations, a late paper, but it was not late enough to carry the story of the restaurant mob-scene. In it, however, was a garbled account of our traffic jam and a reference to the six elevators simultaneously and unaccountably stuck in the I.T.V. Building, but no connection was suggested.

My mind was in too much of an uproar to read, and I paced up and down. It seemed hours since McGill had called my lawyer Vinelli; some fantastic mishap must be holding him up, I thought. Then I happened to bump into the door of the cell and found the lock hadn't caught.

More of the same! But there didn't seem any point in trying to escape. Where would I go? Besides, I would have to leave through the desk room, where there would be at least the desk lieutenant and a sergeant on the phone. I began to wonder what effect it would have if I were to call out and tell them.

"Hey!" I shouted, but my voice was drowned out by a blast from the radio in the squad room. It died down immediately; someone must have hit a loud spot on the dial. I had an idea.

"Hey!" I shouted again, and again was drowned out. I opened the barred door and looked up and down the corridor. No one was in sight. Without making any unnecessary noise, but not stealthily, either, I walked as naturally as I could past the door to the squad room, where all heads were turned away, listening to the sensational pronouncements of Bill Bart, the radio gossip.

"... and in your commentator's view, this man is dangerous! After attacking a woman and setting fire to a restaurant, he was arrested and is being held for investigation, but I predict that the double-domes and alleged scientists will come up with some more gobbledegook and we ordinary citizens will be left in the dark as to why or how Graham is causing all this trouble. So far,

fortunately, no one has been seriously injured, but I predict . . ."

I left and went on down the corridor.

So Bill Bart was giving me a play! What kind of crazy guesswork was he foisting on his public, I wondered, and came to the the desk room. I looked in at the door. On one side, a sergeant was talking to an elderly worried-looking couple and never turned his head. On the other, a gray-haired lieutenant sitting at the raised desk dropped his glasses as I came in. They fell on the floor and smashed.

"Mother of God!" he muttered and gave me a cursory glance. "Good night, Doctor," he said. "Not that there's anything good about it." He was fumbling in the desk as I walked out of the door.

ON THE other side of the street, in the shadows, was a man who crossed over as I came down the steps. It was McGill.

"I had a hunch this might happen," he said, taking my arm. "The car's up ahead. Vinelli came here as quick as he could, but he slipped coming along the street and broke his ankle."

"Judas!" I said. "I am sorry! I feel responsible. Where are we going?"

He didn't answer me at first; he just kept hurrying me along. One of those New York siroccos

was pretending to cool the city, and at the corner I saw his old coupe with the parking lights on. A saloon next to us was closing up and a few late customers came out onto the sidewalk. One customer, on seeing me, stopped and turned to the others.

"That's the guy I was telling you about! That's Graham!"

I saw then that it was our telephone repairman from the afternoon. He looked reasonably sober, but his friends did not.

"Oh, yeah?" one of these said, eying me belligerently. "I thought we just heard Bill Bart broadcast the cops had him."

"Right," said another of them. "He's escaped! I'll hold him and you go on in and phone 'em."

"Nah, the joint's closed. Police station's right around the corner. I'll go tell 'em. Hold onto him now!"

The repairman and three of his pals began to advance warily and the other one ran down Charles Street, but at that moment we heard excited yapping and a small dog chasing a cat came tearing up the street. The cat had a fish head in its mouth and, ignoring us, ran through the middle of the group, dropping the fish head. The dog followed almost instantly, only he ran between the repairman's legs, upsetting him. In falling, the repairman tripped his neighbor, who fell

on him, and another one fell on top of them. The remaining one stepped on the fish head.

"Black cat!" he cried as he joined the others on the sidewalk. "Crossed my path!"

We got into McGill's car and he pulled away fast. As I looked back, the four men were flailing around, but they saw the direction we took. I also thought I saw the street lamp behind us go out.

"That was a lucky break!" I said. "I mean the cat and dog."

"Don't give it a thought," McGill said, driving fast but carefully up Hudson Street. "You're being watched over and protected. We're going up to my office and have a conference and we're going to drive like hell. I have an idea this thing may not be able to do much more than hang onto you. Maybe we can even shake it."

"Hang onto me?"

"Yes, you're the nucleus."

WE WERE at the top of the ramp to the Westside Highway and he abruptly put on more speed: no traffic was in sight.

"But what is it?" I asked a little wildly. "How's it doing it? Why pick on me?"

"I don't know, but I'd say it picked you as the nucleus because you had just been the subject of various flukes — the taxi and subway and so on — so you repre-

sented a sample of what it's made of — flukes. I have a hunch you'll continue to be protected."

"Did you happen to catch Bill Bart's broadcast?"

"Yes, I did. On the car radio coming over. Not good. He said—"

In the rear-view mirror, I saw a police car overhauling us. We were doing a good sixty-five. "Here come the cops," I interrupted, but before McGill could answer, there was a faint pop and the police car wobbled and slowed to a stop, and was quickly out of sight.

"Blowout," I said.

"See what I mean?" McGill answered, and turned on two wheels into the 125th Street exit. Then he added, "Molly's waiting for us in my office."

I felt better.

We drove through some immortal gateway and McGill moderated his speed. He pulled up in front of a darkened building and we climbed the steps. It seemed cooler here and the wind was very strong. McGill tried the door, but it was locked. Then he felt in his pocket and swore.

"No key?" I asked.

He shook his head and then shook the door, and went through his pockets again. I reached forward and shook the door, too. The lock clicked and we went in. I made an apologetic gesture and McGill raised his eyebrows.

We climbed a flight of stairs, all dark except for a faint glow that came in from the campus lights, and then along an echoing hallway to an office in which were Molly and some unimportant items, among them a desk radio that she turned off as we came in.

She gave me her professional nurse's smile and I sat down next her. Molly's professional nurse's smile is not a phony "Everything's going to be all right," but a signal. It's supposed to mean "Never mind what these cretins are saying about you. You're okay."

I was a little puzzled that she showed no surprise to see me.

"Well," McGill said, "my hunch was right. He got out."

"So I see," said Molly, smiling at me proudly. "What happened? Knock over one of the jailers?"

I shook my head and told her, including the cat-and-dog episode and the police car blowout.

"Don't forget the lock downstairs," McGill said, and when I told her that, too, he added, "You see, I think it's beginning to take sides. I think it's watching out for its nucleus. Alec ought to be rather lucky right now."

"Well, I don't feel it," I said. "I feel hemmed in."

MOLLY glanced at me anxiously and turned back to him. "What do we do now?"

"First, before any more funny stuff happens, I want to rig up a few tests and see what's with Alec, if anything. I'll even test for EMF, Molly, just for the sake of satisfying you."

"For what?" I asked.

"Electromagnetic force. Come and give me a hand, Molly. Alec, you stay put and relax. We'll call you when we get set. I only hope to God the cops and the newshawks don't tumble to where we are."

They left and I went to the window and looked out at the wind blowing papers and dust into miniature tornadoes in the dim light, and wondered whether it was going to storm. A few belated students on the way to their dormitories evidently were wondering the same thing, for they were all looking up at the sky. I went to the desk and turned the radio on, low.

". . . are doing all they can, which doesn't seem much," Bill Bart was saying breathlessly. "He was last seen speeding uptown on the Westshore Drive, but the cops lost him. The town is gripped in superstitious fear — it is now known that Graham was responsible for the elevators jamming in the I.T.V. Building this morning — but how did he do it? I ask you: how? And how has he turned off all the electric power in Greenwich Village? I contacted

the power company for an explanation, but I was put off with the usual doubletalk. I say, and I repeat, *this man must be caught!* He is . . ."

I turned him off. So that was what the street light going off had meant.

In a little while, Molly came back. "All right, duck, come and be measured. He's got galvanometers and electronic devices and stuff, and he'll be able to detect anything you're emanating down to a milli-micro-whisker."

I followed her into the lab where I was sat down, taped up and surrounded with gadgets. McGill tried various things and read various dials. There were buzzing sounds and little lights blinked on and off, but at the end he shook his head.

"Nothing," he announced, "You're married to a non-ferrous, non-conducting, non-emanating, non-magnetic writer, Molly."

"He is, too!" she said. "He's as magnetic as the dickens."

"Possibly, but he isn't emanating anything. The damn thing apparently just likes him. As a nucleus, I mean."

"Is that bad?" Molly asked. "Could it be dangerous?"

"It's bad," I put in morosely.

"Also it could be good," McGill said, with a gleam of scientific enthusiasm, "Why, it wouldn't surprise me, Alec, if you could do

anything you wanted to that involved chance."

I didn't like the guinea-pigs'-eye view of him I got, and told him so. "Except for a couple of minor escapes, it's been highly inconvenient," I said. "I don't want to seem ungrateful, but I wish it would go and help somebody else."

"But, my God, man! Do you realize if you went to the track tomorrow, your horse probably couldn't lose?"

"I wouldn't get that far," I grumbled.

"And I bet if somebody threw a knife at you, it would miss!" McGill went on, ignoring me. "Here, I'd like to try an experiment . . ."

"Now, hold on!" I said.

"McGill! Are you *crazy*?" Molly cried, but he ignored her also and opened his desk drawer, from which he took a pair of dice.

"Roll me some sevens, Alec," he said, handing them to me.

"I thought we came here for a conference," I protested. "And I don't know whether you know about it, but there's been a Village-wide electric power failure and I'm being blamed, according to Bill Bart."

"Holy cow! When did you hear that?"

"On your radio just now.

Furthermore, he says the whole town is gripped in 'superstitious terror.'"

"That could be true," McGill answered. "Most people haven't progressed beyond the Dark Ages. Look what happened with Orson Welles' broadcast about the Martians."

"Maybe we ought to leave town for a while." Molly said. "We could go to Oyster Bay or somewhere." Then she glanced up. "What's that noise?"

Outside, I now noticed, mingled with the sighing of the wind, a susurrus of many voices. We went to the lab windows. A crowd of two or three hundred people was standing in the campus, staring up at the sky over us.

"What are they looking at?" McGill asked. "No one can possibly know we're here."

I started to lean out of the window, twisting up my head to see what it could be.

"Don't do that, Alec! They'll see you!" McGill warned, and I pulled my head in.

"Can we get on the roof?" I asked, but Molly suddenly said, "Look who's here." Three squad cars drove up and several policemen got out.

"Perhaps we ought to sort of very gently turn the lights off," I suggested.

Molly immediately snapped off the shaded bench lamp, which

was all that was on in the lab. This left McGill's office light, and I started toward it.

"Hadn't we better run for it?" Molly said, but a loud banging on the front door downstairs answered her.

"I hope that damn lock doesn't give again!" McGill breathed.

"They'll break it down!" Molly gasped.

"Like hell. It's University property and they can't possibly have gotten a search warrant so quickly at this time of night."

FROM outside came a loud voice: "Alec Graham! Are you in there?"

"Don't answer," said McGill. "And keep away from the windows. I guess they saw the light in my office." He leaned out. "What do you want?" he shouted.

"This is the police. Open up!" "I won't unless you have a warrant!"

There was no more shouting. They seemed to be parlaying among themselves, but the crowd had a menacing sound. A brilliant light suddenly hit our windows, illuminating the lab ceiling — a police searchlight. I saw that Molly had disappeared and I assumed she had gone into McGill's office.

"These guys mean business," he said, "but what the hell brought them?"

"Something on the roof. That's what they're all looking at, so why don't we go up and see?"

"All right, but you'd better stay down here. There's no parapet and they'll see you."

He started for the door and I decided to follow — at least as far as the trapdoor, or whatever gave onto the roof — when Molly came in from the hall. She looked scared.

"My God! I climbed an iron ladder and took a look outside. There's a small cyclone over us — a ton of torn papers and dust and junk whirling around like a waterspout! They'd be able to see it for blocks!

"Oh, great," McGill groaned. "Now it's playing tricks with the wind. That's how they spotted us."

"We've got to get out of here, McGill," said Molly.

"Maybe the best thing would be for me to give myself up to the cops," I said.

"I don't know whether they'd be able to get you through that mob," McGill replied. "Just listen to them. I only wish I could think of some way to satisfy the damn crystal or whatever it is. I have the feeling it wants something. It can't be merely fooling around for no reason. But there doesn't seem to be any motive beyond the fact that it's apparently on your side. How did it

start? That's what I wish I knew."

He absently turned the bench lamp on again. I shrugged unhappily and scratched my cheek. In so doing, I pulled the piece of pink adhesive tape loose and it began to bleed again.

"Cut yourself shaving, darling?" Molly asked me.

"No," I said. "As a matter of fact, it was a kind of freak accident."

"Oh?" McGill lifted his head interestedly. "Anything involving you and a fluke I want to hear about. Tell Papa."

I did and McGill began to get his dedicated look. "You say this piece of glass just blew up? What did it look like? How big was it?"

"I only saw it for a second. It was dirty and I'd say about two feet across — more or less round and with flat places all over it."

MCGILL came toward me in a state of great excitement. "That piece that hit your cheek — did it merely nick you or is it embedded? If it *is* embedded . . ." He picked up a bottle of alcohol and a piece of cotton and took a lens out of a drawer. "Molly, there's a pair of tweezers in my desk. Will you fetch them?" He tilted the light up onto my face and dabbed the cut with the alcohol.

"Ouch!"

"Keep still. It'll sting a little. . . . Yes, I think I can see it." He took the tweezers from Molly, who had returned, and neatly removed something from the cut. He held it under the light and looked at it through the lens. Then he rinsed it under the water faucet, dried it on a piece of filter-paper and looked at it again. "Well, it looks like glass. I don't know. Maybe it's the nucleus of the glass chunk and . . ." His voice trailed off and he frowned at nothing in particular, putting the fragment down on the filter-paper.

I picked it up. It seemed like a bit of sand, only brighter.

McGill's concern over this new object of interest had been so intent that for a few minutes our attention was diverted, but now Molly began to pace up and down. There didn't seem to be anything for us to do, and unlike most nurses, waiting makes her nervous. She was looking at the display of various chemicals and reagents on the shelves.

"What's that stuff?" she asked, pointing to a large jar of black powder labeled Deflocculated Graphite. "I bet those cops have gone for a search warrant."

"Finely divided carbon," McGill said. "Damn, I wish I could think of something! A chunk of glass . . . blowing up . . ."

"Graphite is carbon?" Molly

said. "You don't think they'd actually do anything to Alec, do you?"

"It's another form of carbon. A diamond is still another: the rare crystalline form," he said. "I wouldn't put it past that mob to do anything."

"Oh, yes. I remember that in chemistry," Molly said. "But the police wouldn't let them, McGill, would they?"

"I've got an idea —" I tried to break in.

"They might not be able to stop them," McGill replied.

"We've got to get out of here!" Molly said for the second time.

"If a diamond —" I began.

"With a helicopter, we might," McGill said. "Right now, we're surrounded."

"How about hiding Alec?" Molly asked. "You and I could act innocent."

"I don't want to be hidden," I objected. "My idea is —"

"Or better yet, we could act guilty. That would appeal to them, wouldn't it, McGill?"

"They'd tear the place apart if they got in," McGill said.

I TOOK a surreptitious look out of the windows again. It seemed to hit me that our being surrounded was an exaggeration; most of the crowd was centered about the police car directly in front of the main door. They had

an ugly look, and while I didn't like the idea of being alone, neither did I relish the thought of my presence possibly causing my wife and my best friend to be the victims of mob violence, for although the police might, in the absence of a warrant, refrain from breaking in, the mob might not. So I decided to leave, confident that some bizarre manifestation would lead them away from the lab, and that no matter where I went, I could hardly be worse off. To keep moving was my best bet.

Molly and McGill were still discussing the situation as I tiptoed into the hall. There surely would be a back door — probably in the basement — and I went down three flights to a cement-floored corridor. Then, with lighted matches, I found my way to a door at the back of the building, at the end. I opened it and peered out, to see a retaining wall and stone steps leading up to ground level. I eased out into the areaway and pulled the door shut, noticing that I still held the folded filter-paper with the fragment in it. The lock clicked and I realized that my bridge was, as they say, burned behind me.

Two cops were talking together a little way to my right, but their backs were turned and they were looking up. I, too, looked and

saw the whirlpool of debris, which was exactly as Molly had described and quite as attention-calling. Clutching the filter-paper like a talisman, I climbed the steps and gumshoed away to the left, but as I got to the corner, I met a group of young men, also looking up.

One of these was saying, "That's a lynch mob, if ever I saw one! I don't get it."

"Mob psychology, that's the answer," explained another.

My heart congealed, but they walked right by me. It suddenly occurred to me that any newspapers that had carried the story would scarcely have been able to dig up a photograph of me yet. All I had to do was to walk out of the campus, for who would recognize me? Where I would go then was something I could decide later.

So I started out with more assurance, but I took the precaution to act like an onlooker by glancing up over my shoulder now and then at the airborne maelstrom.

As I got to the other side of the open space, I had another shock. A few yards ahead was another group of policemen, one of whom, I saw with dismay, was the lieutenant from Charles Street, and he was beginning to turn around. I barely had time to duck into a doorway to avoid

being seen. I had the feeling of a member of the I.R.A. in Dublin during the Troubles, and I crouched against the door.

I could now hear the lieutenant's voice: "Of course he's up there! Maddigan'll be here with a warrant any minute now and we'll . . ." His voice faded away.

BEHIND me, the door suddenly opened and I almost fell. A young student holding some notebooks emerged.

"Sorry," he said, and walked toward the crowd.

The door had not yet closed and I slipped in, with my heart irretrievably contracted to the size of a buckshot. I could just make out in the dim light that I was at the bottom of the fire stairs, so I climbed to the third floor and went into a classroom, then on into an office somewhat like McGill's, that faced toward the lab building.

From here, I had a perfect view of the crowd, the police, the upper facade of the labs, brightly lit by the searchlight and, over all, the spinning papers and dust, which even as I looked began to die down. I was unable to see Molly or McGill and wondered whether they had noticed my absence and were worrying.

I saw a phone on the desk at my side and considered calling up McGill's office, but first I

wanted to think over my new idea. I pulled down the shades and turned on the reading lamp, by the light of which I re-examined the fragment I had been carrying around all day. It sparkled brilliantly. On the desk, beside an onyx pen-set, a golf trophy and a signed golf ball, was a leather-framed photograph of a blank-faced young woman holding a pudgy little boy. I picked it up and rubbed the glass with the tiny fragment. It left a faint but undeniable scratch. So I was right about one thing.

Then I called McGill's office. In a few moments, I heard the receiver lifted, but no voice. "This is the nucleus," I said, and I heard of sigh of relief from McGill.

"Where in hell are you?"

"Across the way. Look out of your window and I'll turn my light off and on again." I did so.

"You're in Professor Crandal's office. Why did you leave?"

"We'll go into that later. McGill, that fragment is a diamond."

"What!"

"At any rate, it scratches glass."

"Why didn't you tell me that before? And where is it? I couldn't find it anywhere."

"I was sidetracked. I've got it here. Now my idea —"

— "A diamond! I begin to see light. Give with the idea, Alec."

"Well, there was all this talk

of crystals and then you were telling Molly about carbon and diamonds, and it occurred to me that what we have is something trying to crystallize — something that once was a crystal, and got broken up and wants to re-form. It keeps trying with playing cards and pigeons and automobiles, but it's no go. Why don't we give it some carbon to play with, McGill?"

THERE was a short silence. I looked across at the office, but I couldn't see him. I noticed a piece of dirty newspaper that had fallen out of the maelstrom and had caught on a thick wire that stretched from one of the lab windows to immediately below mine — some kind of aerial, I imagined. Then I saw that the maelstrom, rather than breaking up, as I had thought, was moving over in my direction. I would be pointed out again.

"You mean the graphite, I suppose," McGill said. "Why in hell did you leave and take the fragment with you?"

"I forgot it was in my hand," I said, dodging the first part of the question. "Nobody on the campus recognized me, so I guess I can walk back." Then I remembered the locked basement door and the fact that I could scarcely be let in by McGill, with the cops standing around, but I

was feeling light-headed and damage-proof. It was protecting its nucleus, which, even if I wasn't any more, I had in my hand. My crystalline rabbit's foot.

"Hold on a second," I said. "I've got another idea."

I put down the receiver, and picked up the golf ball from the desk, and put it on the floor. I stood up and put my right foot on it and, holding my breath, I raised my other foot. In any event, I would not have far to fall — but I did not fall. I remained upright, holding the filter-paper and wobbling a little. Then I relaxed and closed my eyes — still I did not fall. The rabbit's foot was working, just as McGill said. I stepped down two inches and picked up the phone.

"I'm coming across," I said. "That is, if the wire that runs over here from the lab is strong enough to hold me."

"Alec! You're nuts!" McGill said, and I hung up. (Diamonds of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your nucleus.)

I took a look over the sill at the wire. It was held by a powerful steel eye-bolt, securely attached to the brickwork. Clutching the diamond fragment in its paper, I climbed over the sill and put a foot on the wire and felt immediately seasick. The wire vibrated like a harp-string, but did not give noticeably, and



I put my other foot on it. Then I almost blacked out and closed my eyes.

When I opened them again, I found I had progressed some distance into the void. Nothing was holding me from over-balancing, but my body seemed to right itself automatically, as if I were a veteran tightrope walker.

In a frozen daze, I edged along, keeping my eyes fixed on the distant window in which I could see McGill and Molly watching me with white faces.

WHEN I was about half way, the crowd caught sight of me and yelled. A man with a broad-brimmed hat ran out from the others and, to my horror, pulled out a gun. Another man picked up a stone, wound himself up like a sand-lot pitcher, and hurled it just before the other pulled his trigger. They were excellent shots: the stone was hit by the bullet and both disintegrated. The man's gun jammed at his second try and the two heroes were grabbed by the police.

With my heart pounding, I kept going, until, about four yards from safety, my foot caught, and I looked down again. There was a splice in the wire, sticking up from which was a sharp end. I staggered and righted myself . . . and let go of the filter-paper.

By now, the maelstrom was directly over me and my talisman was caught in the up-draught. It did not fall, but I did. After a sickening instant, I was brought up with a jerk that nearly strangled me. The back of my coat had caught on the projecting wire and I swung there like an unused marionette.

The crowd shouted and milled around, and the cops called out directions to each other. One order was to send for the Fire Department. I found I could breathe, but I could not look down.

The all-important paper was fluttering around near the lab window and McGill was making grabs at it. Then it suddenly blew right in by him. His head reappeared and he shook his clasped hands at me. Molly remained at the window, her eyes round, the fingers of each hand crossed. I essayed a debonair smile, which she tried to answer. In the distance, I heard the owl-sound of approaching fire engines.

From behind Molly there suddenly came an intense blue light, which rapidly increased until she became a dark silhouette, and I could just make out McGill looking at the glare, his eyes shielded by what I took to be a deep-blue bottle. His stance suggested elation. There appeared to be a terrific in-draught—all the win-

dow shades were blowing straight into the lab and Molly's red hair streamed behind her.

In what was actually almost no time, I heard the Fire Department turn into the campus, and one piece of equipment skidded to a stop directly under me. There was the sound of a winch and then I felt something touch my foot. At that moment, my jacket gave way with a tearing sound, Molly closed her eyes, and I landed like an oversize tarantula on top of the fireman's ladder.

Firemen and cops were climbing toward me, alternated like meat and tomatoes on a shish-kebab. First to reach me was my friend the lieutenant. He re-arrested me and pulled. I shook my head to his earnest entreaties and hung on with the tenacity of the unbrave. It seems to be impossible to detach a determined man from a ladder when you are also on it.

He and his friends gave up finally and ordered the ladder lowered, but one last fluke intervened — if it was a fluke. The machinery refused to work and we drove away, with me swaying grandly on my perch.

THE lieutenant had the hook-and-ladder driven to a distant police station, where in due course Vinelli, the lawyer, arrived with

his foot in a cast, and I was bailed out. The cops showed me surprising consideration; it turned out they were furious at the irresponsible riding they had been getting from Bill Bart. A scientific big-shot that McGill knew, named Joe Stein, convinced them I was in no way to blame, and the case was dropped. Professor Stein gave a wonderfully incomprehensible but tranquilizing statement to the press, and Molly and I went to Oyster Bay.

"In two weeks, everybody'll have forgotten all about it," the lieutenant told us. "You may even be a hero. I don't know."

Before we left, we went with McGill to the lab and saw the diamond. It sat on a bench, gleaming brilliant, smooth-faceted and without a flaw. It was at least two feet across, about the same as the chunk of "glass" on Fifty-first Street.

"The cops never recognized what it was," McGill said, "it being so big."

"Who would?" Molly asked. "McGill, I've got an idea —"

"All I had to do," McGill said, ignoring her, "was to put the graphite on some cinder blocks and the fragment on the graphite. Then I turned a bunsen flame on it and it caught fire with a terrifically bright flame — very small — I guess you saw it." I nodded. "It didn't give off any heat," he

went on. "Adiabatic process. And it got its necessary pressure from the random motions together of the graphite particles. Some random motions! When that was used up, it started on the cinder blocks and then the CO₂ in the air. That's what caused the suction: the blinds were blown straight in. You probably missed that." I shook my head. "Anyway, this thing —"

"McGill," Molly interrupted, "I've got an *idea*!"

"— this thing has got to be dumped out at sea."

"Oh," Molly said, looking crestfallen. "I was just going to say why don't we break a piece off and sell it in Amsterdam?"

"God God, no! That would only start it up all over again!"

"Just a *little* piece, McGill?"

"NO!"

With Stein's help, McGill convinced the police that the thing had to be dumped, and we dropped it off a police launch beyond Sandy Hook, to their

bored perplexity. They would have been still more puzzled if they had known what it was.

McGill came down to Oyster Bay for the weekend and we played a game of gin rummy — a truly memorable game, because the cards behaved and I even lost a little.

He congratulated me in a pre-occupied way, which annoyed me. "I should think you'd be gladder than that," I told him.

"I am," he said. "But there's something else —"

"What's that?" asked Molly, worried.

"The schools of fish are traveling head to tail. I'm wondering if that's just the beginning of another mess."

We went back to playing gin rummy, but our minds weren't on what we were doing. They haven't been since. Just yesterday, an ocean liner chased its berthing tugboats away and went sightseeing up the Hudson River.

—STEPHEN BARR

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